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understanding gluten free

How a company that built a reputation on gluten tackled its biggest challenge yet

"I just want a good sandwich!" Gluten free consumers crave the basics.

How does America's oldest flour company go gluten-free? That's what King Arthur Flour executives asked themselves when their customers began demanding help in their quest for delicious gluten-free baked goods.

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> "the very best gluten-free mixes on the market."

King Arthur Flour's gluten-free baking mixes are the only major brand to be third-party certified by the Gluten Free Certification Organization, with standards twice as stringent as those set by the Food and Drug Administration. In addition, they are produced in a dedicated allergen-free facility, guaranteed to be free of the top eight most common food allergens. They are also certified Kosher by the Chicago Rabbinical Council. Says Payne, "We're sure customers will agree these are the very best gluten-free mixes on the market today."

More and more Americans are choosing to eat a gluten-free diet for a variety of reasons. In fact, the market for gluten-free foods has grown at an average annual rate of 28% since 2004, and current estimates predict it will reach $2.6 billion by 2012. These consumers say what they crave the most are the staple foods and classic treats that most people take for granted, like a good sandwich or a slice of birthday cake. Substitutes exist, but most lack the taste – and especially the texture – of the real thing. Now, King Arthur Flour offers an alternative that meets both the needs of the gluten-free diet and the desires of the consumer.

Available immediately to food retailers nationwide, King Arthur Flour's gluten-free line includes GlutenFree Multi-Purpose Flour for scratch baking, along with seven convenience mixes: GlutenFree Bread Mix, Pizza Crust Mix, Cookie Mix, Brownie Mix, Chocolate Cake Mix, Muffin Mix, and Pancake Mix. The new products are supported with recipes for gluten-free baking available at kingarthurflour.com, as well as a national print advertising campaign and grassroots outreach within the gluten-free community. And King Arthur Flour is committed to working with retail partners to ensure the launch of its new gluten-free line is a success.

King Arthur Flour is one of America's best-selling flours, known for its consistent baking performance and lack of chemical additives. King Arthur Flour is also the largest educator of home bakers in the world. America's oldest flour company, King Arthur Flour's fundamental mission is to be the highest-quality product, education, and information resource for, and inspiration to, bakers worldwide. More information is available at kingarthurflour.com. King Arthur Flour is a 100% employee-owned business.

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Cover *Four-cheese macaroni and cheese.* Photograph by Michael Kraus

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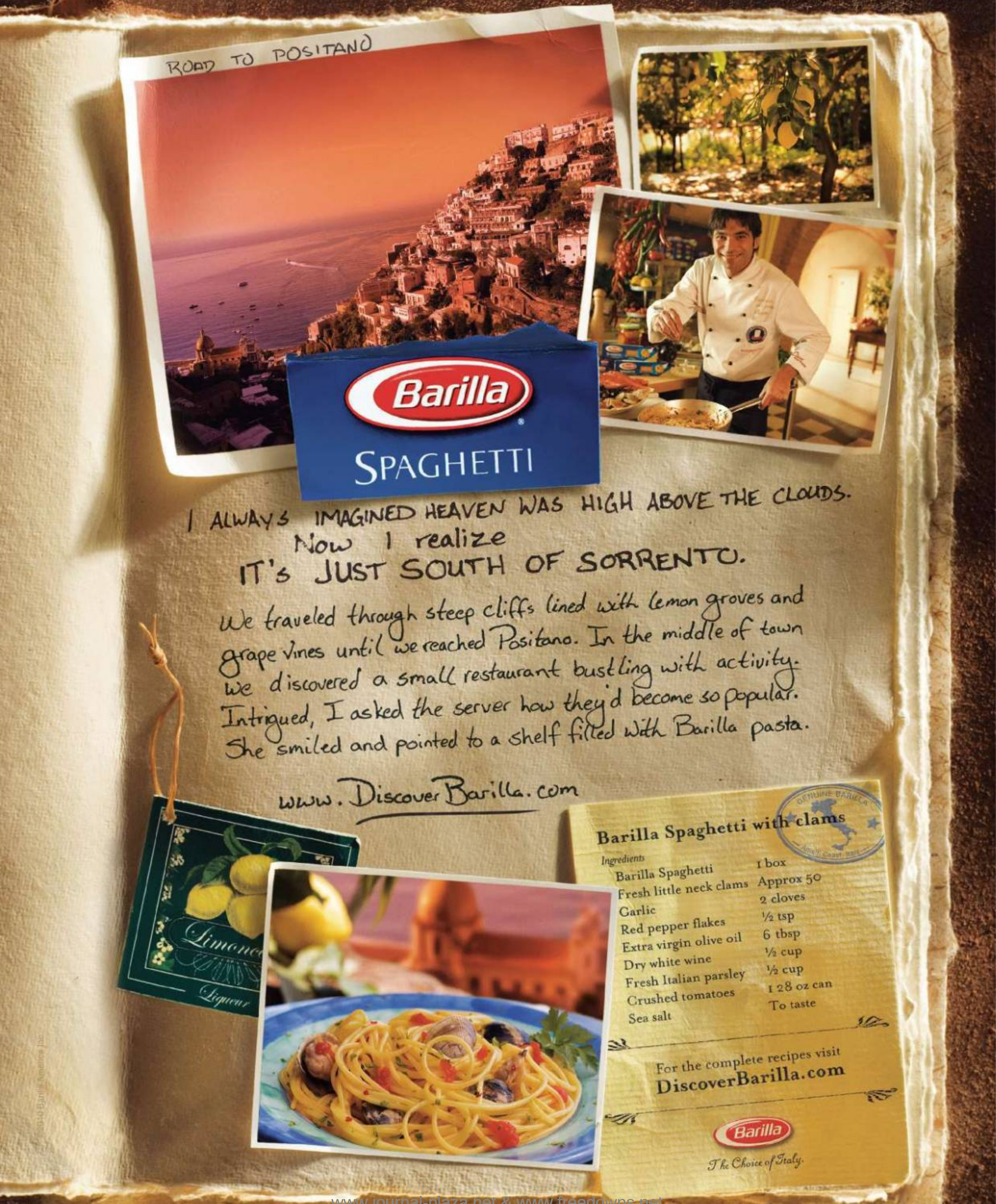

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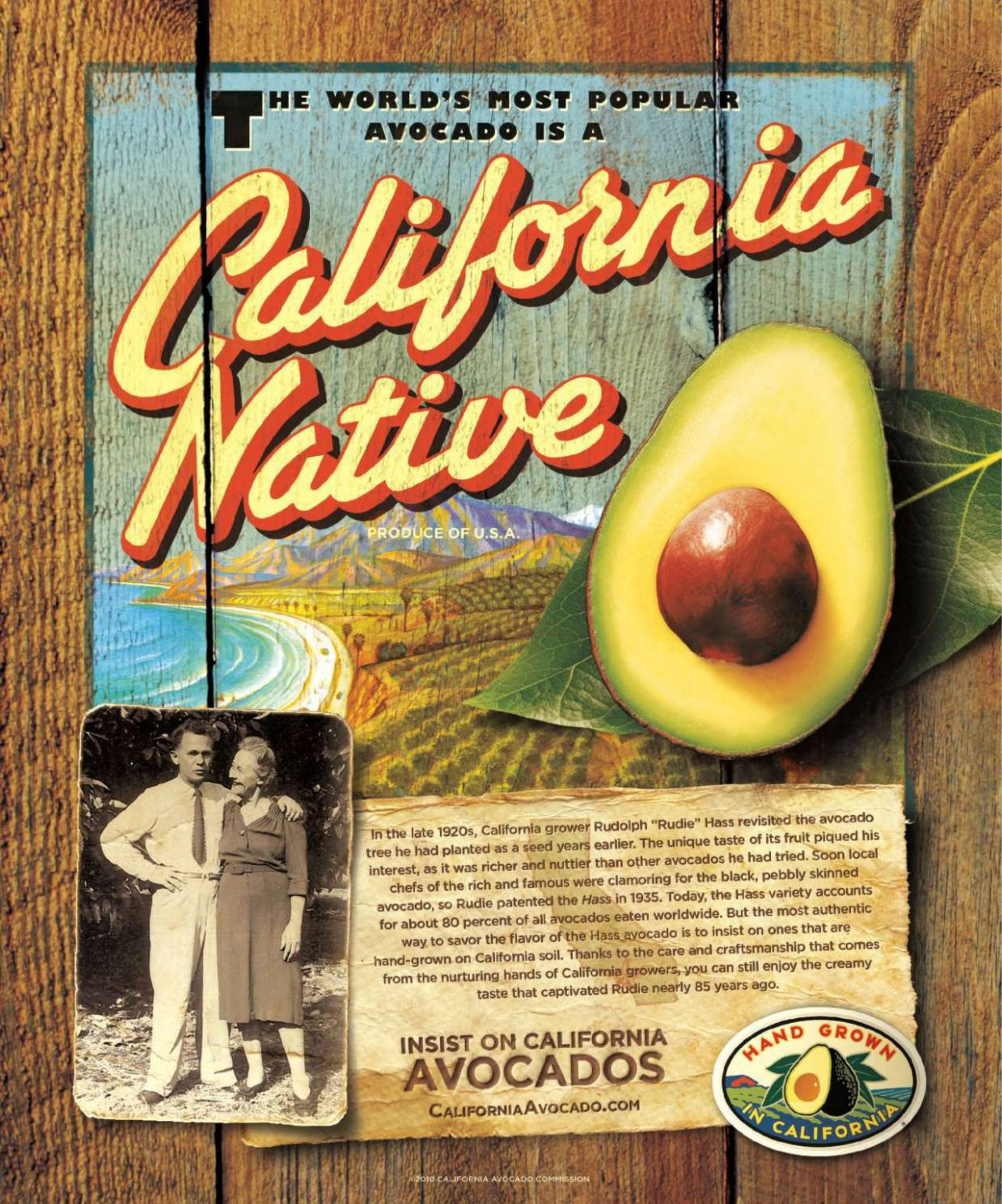

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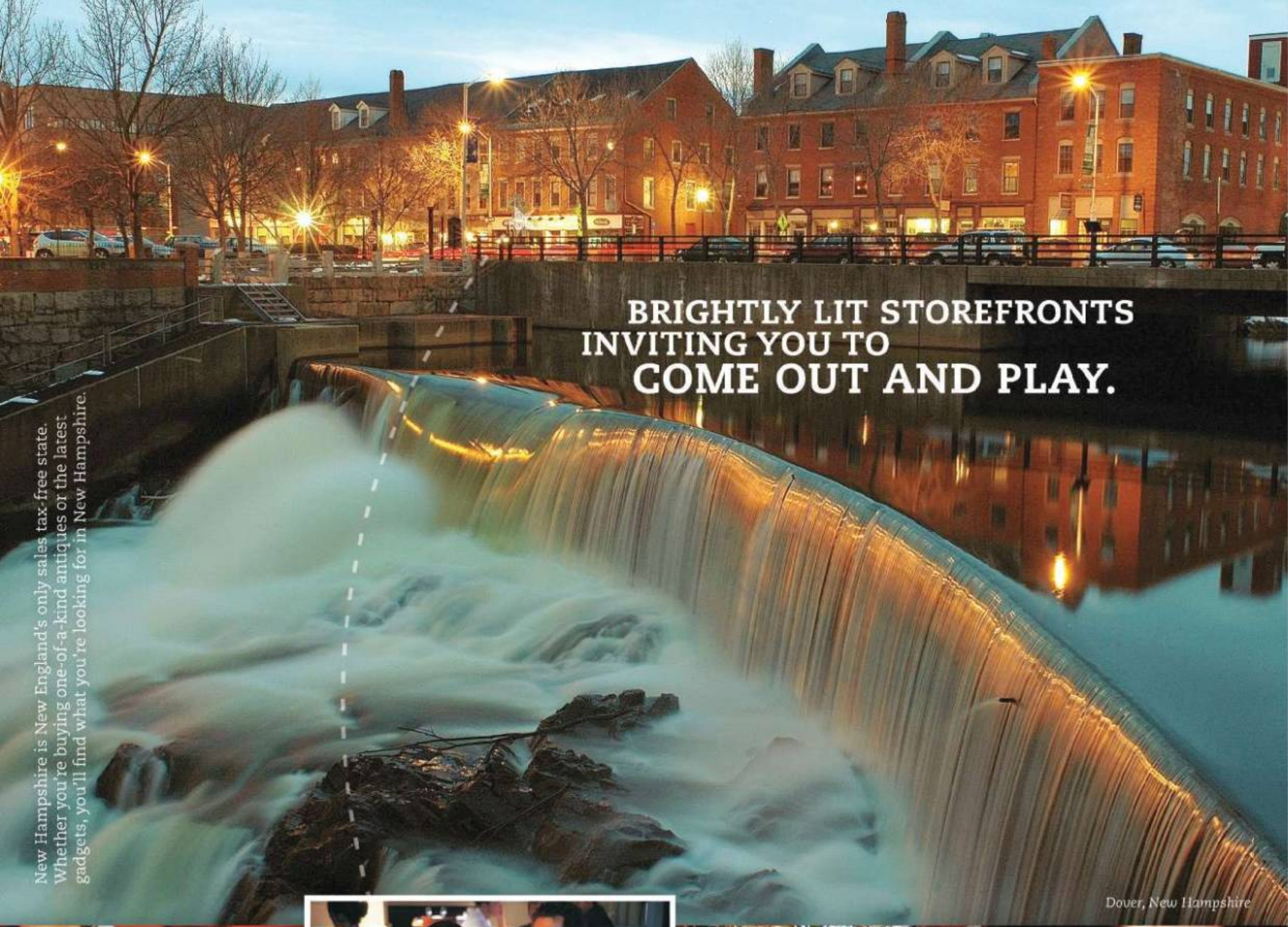

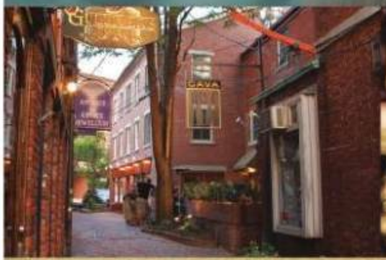

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It's no surprise that with running his busy flagship restaurant, The Slanted Door in San Francisco, there's only one pace Charles is comfortable with—fast. Whether hiking Black Butte at Mt. Shasta with friends, kayaking in Monterey with his kids, or catching rockfish at the Farallon Islands with his brother, Charles is always looking for the next California adventure—and naturally, the perfect meal to accompany it. Find out more about Charles Phan's California, at visit**california**.com/charles

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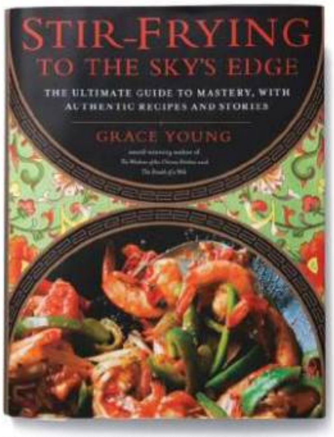
FIRST

Real Fast Food

Revelations from Beijing's home kitchens

SOMETIMES, GETTING firsthand food knowledge means getting inside a restaurant kitchen, but more often it means an invitation into someone's home. In my experience, that's where you'll find the truest expression of a place's flavors, dining customs, and whole way of thinking about cooking. Nothing more firmly convinced me of that truth than the week I spent in Beijing with writer Lillian Chou to photograph her story "A Stir-Fry Education" (page 88). Accompanying Lillian, who is based in Beijing, to the homes of a few seasoned cooks, I witnessed an approach to cooking that made me take a fresh look at my own ways in the kitchen.

The idea for going to Beijing actually came from my friend Grace Young, a SAVEUR contributing editor who, like Lillian, is Chinese-American and fascinated by the cooking traditions of mainland China. I'd been talking to Grace about her new cookbook, which she titled *Stir-Frying to the Sky's Edge*; in it, she gives accounts of amazing stir-fries she's eaten around the world. I loved listening to her talk about this food, and I confessed to her that stir-frying had always been a bit of a mystery to me. I grew up eating Americanized versions, made with Chun King canned water chestnuts and fried noodles and cooked in Teflon skillets, and I'd eaten plenty of stir-fried dishes at Chinese restaurants in New York City and elsewhere. But I'd always wondered what I was missing by not knowing the real thing. "You need to go to China," Grace told me, "and get inside Chinese people's homes. I promise, you'll be impressed." So, I reached out to Lillian Chou; to my delight, she told me that she was interested in writing her own account of learning about Chinese stir-frying from home cooks she knew. A few months later I was on a plane to China, camera in tow.



SAVEUR contributing editor Grace Young's latest cookbook.

What fascinated me the most about the kitchens Lillian and I visited in Beijing wasn't what was in them, but what wasn't. Literally the only cooking items I saw in the homes Lillian took me to were a wok, a cleaver, a ladle, a spatula, a strainer, and a cutting board. With those tools, cooks like Wang Mingjun, a 49-year-old Beijing native, turned out dishes of incredible flavor and subtlety. Watching Mingjun cook, I thought about my own kitchen in New York City, a room festooned with dozens of hanging pots and pans and crowded with electric appliances, knives, and so on. I'd witnessed cooks doing amazing things in spartan kitchens in India and other countries, but unlike the often elaborately spiced, painstakingly constructed dishes I'd learned about in those places, these stir-fries were fast-cooked masterpieces—done in a flash, yet possessed of every bit as much nuance as the most complex curry.

As a guy who usually spends more time cooking a meal than eating it, I found that watching these everyday cooks prepare a typical supper, with casual precision and speed, made a big impression on me—you were right, Grace Young. And although making those delicious stir-fries called for quick hands, the actual moment of sitting down to eat felt natural and unrushed. At Mingjun's apartment, we simply grabbed the nearest chair and a pair of chopsticks and happily tucked in. Cooking fast meant having more time to enjoy eating, for both the cook and the guests. The meal was not a spectacle or a momentous unveiling. It was just a bowl of beautiful, honest food. What more could a hungry stranger ask for? —*TODD COLEMAN, Executive Food Editor*

TODD COLEMAN

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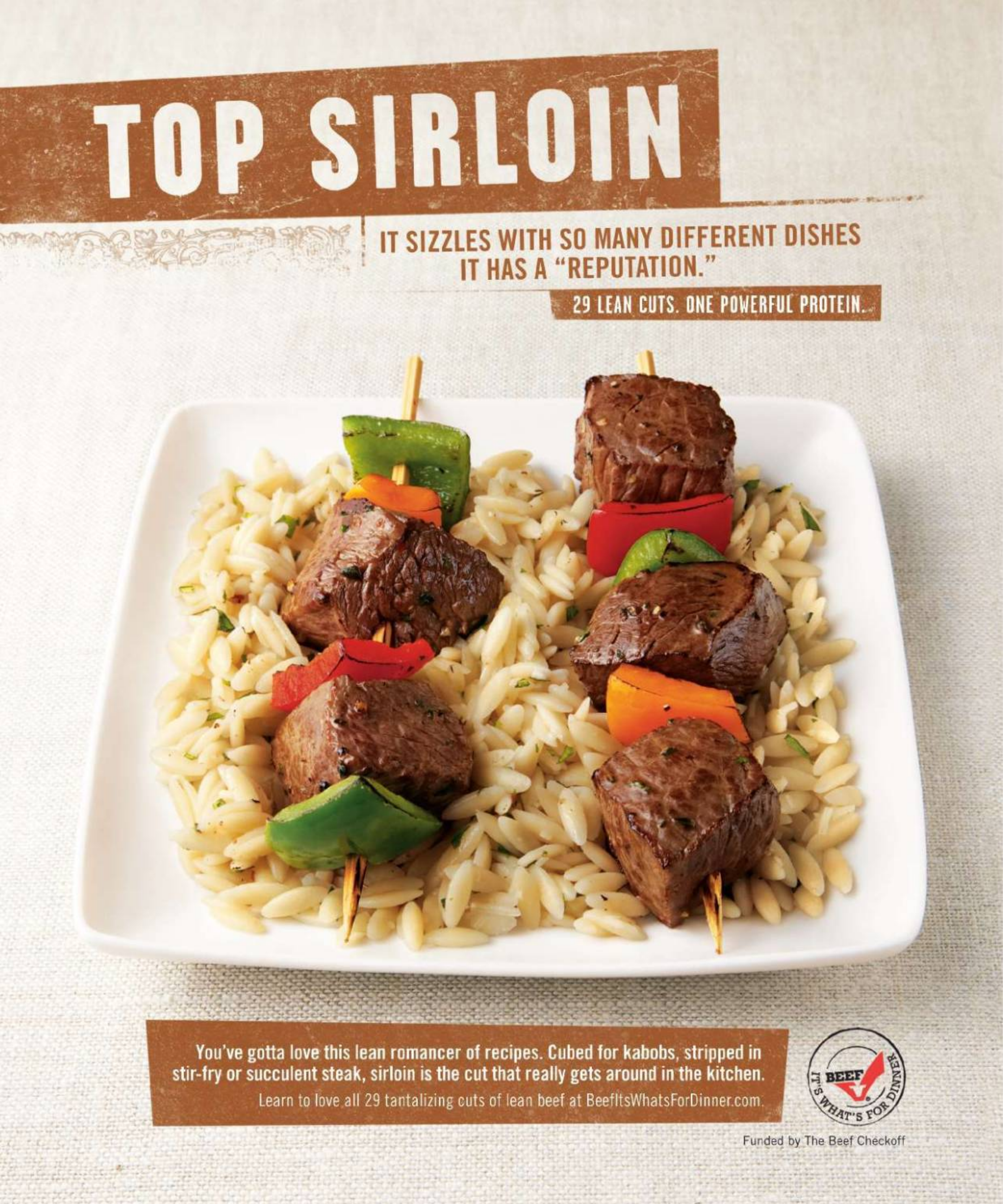

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FARE

Rambles and Recollections from the World of Food, plus Agenda and More

The Cake Lady

The legacy of a go-getting grandmother

THE THERMOMETER on the bank building in Anniston, Alabama, flashed 98 degrees, but inside Mama Clio's air-conditioned Mercury the air was cool and sweet. It was a Friday morning in August; the year was 1967. I sat in the front passenger seat in a pink lace dress, inhaling the scent of freshly baked pound cakes, caramel cakes, lemon cakes, carrot cakes, banana bread, German chocolate cakes, devil's food cakes with white frosting, and—my favorite—yellow cakes iced with chocolate fudge, all carefully stacked in the backseat.

Almost every Friday for more than two decades, my grandmother Clio Hilley loaded up her car and drove the 19 miles from her home in Heflin, Alabama, to the neighboring county seat of Anniston to deliver her weekly orders of cakes. A former school cafeteria cook, she'd always loved baking, and eventually she realized she could make a tidy sum selling her homemade baked goods. Her regular stops included the bank, doctors' offices, the courthouse, Moore's Business Forms, and Tyson Glass. The cakes sold for $2 for a pound cake and $4 for layer cakes; Mama Clio would snap open her red billfold and make change with authority. We grandchildren were

TODD COLEMAN

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always thrilled to come along.

Mama Clio would begin making the cakes on Wednesday. In the morning, she'd sift Softasilk brand cake flour and start mixing up her various batters in her Sears electric mixer, which was about as high-tech as her kitchen got. She measured ingredients with a coffee cup, beat egg whites by hand, and tested her fudge icing—made on the stove top, with cocoa, milk, and butter—by dropping a bit of it into cool water. If it held together, it was done. While the cake layers cooled on the kitchen table, my sister and I would sit on the porch with the used mixing bowls, scraping out the last traces of that rich, faintly savory chocolate icing.

Mama Clio was good with numbers, instantly figuring out how much butter, sugar, and flour she'd need to fill a week's orders. She didn't work from written recipes. She kept it all in her head. But eventually I wrote down the recipe for that cooked fudge icing, an old-fashioned topping for a yellow cake that is almost impossible to find nowadays—unless, of course, you make it yourself. —*Cathy Cavender*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It's not only wine that sings
Olive oil sings too
It lives in us with its ripe light

—PABLO NERUDA, "ODE TO OLIVE OIL"

Above, the author (back turned) as a girl, with one of Mama Clio's cakes.

YELLOW CAKE WITH FUDGE ICING

SERVES 8–10

The key to making this cake's rich icing is to stir it vigorously once it has cooled to the proper temperature.

- **1 cup vegetable shortening, such as Crisco, plus more for pan**
- **2 cups self-rising flour, plus more for pan**
- **4 cups sugar**
- **5 eggs**
- **2 tsp. vanilla extract**
- **1 cup buttermilk**
- **1/2 cup unsweetened Dutch processed cocoa powder**
- **1/2 cup milk**
- **1/4 tsp. baking soda**
- **6 tbsp. unsalted butter**

❶ Heat oven to 350°. Grease two 9" round cake pans with shortening; dust with flour. Shake out excess flour and line pan bottoms with parchment paper cut to fit; set aside. In bowl of a stand mixer fitted with paddle, beat together 1 cup shortening and 2 cups sugar on medium-high speed until fluffy, 1–2 minutes. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each, until incorporated; add 1 tsp. vanilla. Reduce mixer speed to low; alternately add flour and buttermilk in 3 batches. Mix until smooth. Divide batter between pans. Bake until a toothpick inserted in middle of cakes comes out clean, 35–40 minutes. Set on a rack to cool completely. Remove cakes from pans; set aside.

❷ Whisk together remaining sugar and the cocoa, and then the milk, in a 2-qt. saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat while stirring. Attach a candy thermometer to side of pan; cook, without stirring, until thermometer reads 242°. Remove pan from heat. Stir together remaining vanilla and the baking soda; add to chocolate mixture, along with the butter, and stir until butter is melted. Let icing sit until it cools to 120°. Stir mixture with a wooden spoon (or in bowl of a stand mixer fitted with paddle on medium speed) until icing thickens considerably but is still loose enough to be spread. Working quickly, place one cake layer, top side up, on a cake stand and use a butter knife to spread one-third of icing over top. Place second cake layer, top side down, on top of first, and spread remaining icing over top and side of cake. Chill until icing sets, about 2 hours.

Material World

Good Granite

Heavy granite bowls known as *dolsots* have been used in Korean cooking for centuries. In the U.S., they're sold in Asian stores and online (see page 108 for a source). What's the appeal? They can withstand temperatures as high as 615°F and stay hot for a long time; with use, the stone also absorbs oils that impart an extra flavor to foods. In Korea, a *dolsot* is used for making bubbling stews, as well as for *dolsot bibimbap*, a version of the classic dish of rice, vegetables, meats, and egg. When packed into a *dolsot* that's been heated over a flame, the *bibimbap* is served sizzling, any raw ingredients cook in the bowl, and the rice that's in contact with the stone becomes toasted and chewy. Koreans call that prized layer of rice *nurungji* and mix it with warm water for a porridge called *nurungji bap*. A *dolsot* requires seasoning before use: gently preheat it and brush it with sesame oil. Wash your *dolsot* with hot water only, never with soap, which the stone can absorb. Along with making *bibimbap*, you can use the *dolsot* to crisp polenta and serve soups. —*David Bernstein*

FROM TOP: COURTESY CATHY CAVENDER; TODD COLEMAN. ILLUSTRATION: SCOTT MENCHIN

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Street Heroes

Lima's food hawkers hit the big time

THIS PAST SEPTEMBER, at the Mistura food fair in Lima, Peru, the wait was an hour for the *anticuchos*, or grilled beef hearts, prepared by Grimanesa Vargas Araujo, a street vendor who has been plying her craft in the Miraflores district for more than 35 years. Dressed in a chef's outfit, La Grimanesa, as she is known to fans, tended a charcoal fire and basted chunks of beef heart with a marinade of cumin, garlic, red wine vinegar, and fruity *panca* chiles. As the smoky meat came off the grill, her grown sons Juan Gonzalez and Jesús Campo loaded it onto plates along with boiled potatoes in a fiery *rocoto* chile sauce.

La Grimanesa is one of thousands of Lima vendors who've traditionally sold their fare—*anticuchos*, tamales, *picarones* (squash fritters doused in brown-sugar syrup), and more—from makeshift carts, often attached to bicycles. Fixtures even in affluent areas, these hawkers, most of them women, used to be unregulated. But starting in the 1990s, when then-mayor Alberto Andrade Carmona sought to stop vendors from clogging Lima's historic center, the city began requiring them to get licenses, attend food-handling classes, and adopt new sanitation standards and city-approved equipment.

Like some other vendor fans, I wasn't sure this government oversight was a good idea. But at the food fair, I realized that, far from hampering the vendors' style, the new laws have elevated their status. By the fair's end, La Grimanesa had served 11,000 skewers and—in a turn of events inconceivable in the old days—had received the Silver Pepper Award, a culinary honor bestowed by the government. "The health regulations have helped my business because more tourists feel comfortable eating my *anticuchos*," said La Grimanesa, who's had to buy a bigger grill to keep up with the demand. —*Maricel E. Presilla*

Grimanesa Vargas Araujo with a plate of her *anticuchos*, above.

Agenda May 2010

MAY
6
Anniversary
FIRST VEGGIE THURSDAY OBSERVED
Ghent, Belgium

In 2009, this Flemish city became the world's first municipality to officially promote the health benefits of meatless meals with *Donderdag Veggiedag*, or Veggie Thursday. The government publicizes tempeh Reubens, tofu stir-fries, and other vegetarian dishes offered at local restaurants, while schools serve vegetable-only meals. Other Belgian cities, like Hasselt and Mechelen, are beginning to follow suit. Information: www.vegetarisme.be/ghent.

MAY
16
ESSEN! JEWS AND FOOD IN AMERICA
Amherst, Massachusetts

The National Yiddish Book Center plays host to the first of several food-centric exhibits to be presented at Western Massachusetts museums. This inaugural show covers the past century of Jewish food culture in America. Among its displays, on view from May through October, are historic signs from Jewish food shops. Information: www.museums10.org.

MAY
20
Birthday
HONORÉ DE BALZAC
Tours, France, 1799

The author of *La Comédie Humaine* (pictured above) was a coffee addict. To fuel his 15-hour-a-day writing habit, he consumed 50,000 cups over the course of his 51 years. In "The Pleasures and Pains of Coffee," his paean to the bean, Balzac attributed his prolific output to black coffee, which he admitted also made him prone to harangue grocers. His favorite route to a caffeine high? Chewing the grounds on an empty stomach.

MAY
27
Birthday
CALEB BRADHAM
Chinquapin, North Carolina, 1867

After his father declared bankruptcy, Caleb Bradham left medical school and opened a pharmacy in New Bern, North Carolina, where he began inventing medicinal drinks. One elixir, a mixture of carbonated water, sugar, vanilla, and kola-nut extract—intended to relieve dyspepsia and peptic ulcers—proved a hit with customers, who called it "Brad's Drink." In 1898, Bradham renamed it after the enzyme pepsin, which aids in digesting proteins. He called it Pepsi-Cola.

MAY
21–23
PASO ROBLES WINE FESTIVAL
Paso Robles, California

At this 28-year-old festival, Central Coast grapes like cabernet sauvignon and syrah take center stage as 146 local wineries showcase their most prized bottles. Wine lovers attend pairing classes and tour nearby vineyards, but the main draw is the Wine Country Auction and Dinner, benefiting local charities; participants bid on large-format bottles signed by winemakers, as well as wine dinners and other oenophilic items, while enjoying a multicourse banquet prepared by area chefs. Information: www.pasowine.com/events.

MAY
28–31
WORLD'S LARGEST BRAT FESTIVAL
Madison, Wisconsin

Festival organizers hope attendees will break last year's record of 200,000 bratwursts consumed in four days. Laid end to end, that's nearly 18 miles of brats. So, despite lots of live entertainment and amusement park rides, the main action here is at the grills, where thousands of volunteers will cook more than 14,000 of the German-style sausages every hour, then serve them slathered with a riot of mustards ranging from the festival's own honey mustard to chipotle and horseradish varieties. Information: www.bratfest.com.

ONE GOOD BOTTLE Say "Bordeaux," and most wine lovers think of red wine, but that region also produces some of the world's most appealing whites, among them the **2006 Château de Fieuzal** ($30). Made from sauvignon blanc and sémillon, it comes from a vineyard founded in the Napoleonic era; in the 1890s, it was the favored wine of the Vatican. The château is situated in Pessac-Léognan, just south of the city of Bordeaux, home to some of the region's most fabled labels, including Château Haut-Brion; this stunning white is worthy of their company, and comes at a very reasonable price. Medium yellow in the glass, the wine's zingy nose offers grapefruit and pine, along with some earthiness imparted by age. Though it starts off fairly rich on the palate, it quickly melts into a state of grace: light, harmonious, and refreshingly acidic, with citrus and earth flavors rounded by a hint of vanilla. It's a gorgeous wine for many foods, but it's at its best with fish or poultry in a cream-based sauce. —*David Rosengarten*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY MARICEL E. PRESILLA; COURTESY PEPSICO; ONWHITE/ALAMY; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; COURTESY NATIONAL YIDDISH BOOK CENTER; WORLD HISTORY ARCHIVE/ALAMY;

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Eat Street

12th Avenue, Tucson

Jane and Michael Stern savor 14 tasty Arizona blocks

With its carne, *corn, and nopales, Tucson's cuisine reflects the influence of the northwestern Mexican state of Sonora, which shares a border with Arizona. What's more, much of what we now know as Sonoran fare, including chimichangas and air-dried* carne seca, *was created or popularized in Tucson. The city's position as a culinary crossroads is nowhere more apparent than along the south side's 12th Avenue, a bazaar of fruit stands, bakeries, and diners serving the flamboyant Sonoran hot dog, which originated in the mid-20th century in Hermosillo, the capital of Sonora. Here, a 12th Avenue tour. —J.S. and M.S.*

El Güero Canelo *5201 South 12th Avenue (520/295-9005; www.elguerocanelo.com)* This eatery, with a canopy equipped with nozzles that rain down a cool mist to hydrate the desert air, serves tortas, tacos, and quesadillas, but its specialty is the Sonoran hot dog, an all-beef frank wrapped in bacon, grilled, and then festooned with tomatoes, pinto beans, onions, mustard, hot sauce, and mayonnaise.

La Estrella Bakery, Inc. *5266 South 12th Avenue (520/741-0656; www.laestrellabakeryinc.com)* Inside this stucco bunker is an array of *panes dulces* (pastry breads) and yeast-risen doughnuts still warm from the oven. It's also a source for *bolillo* rolls—essential for the Sonoran hot dog—as well as sugar skulls for the Day of the Dead.

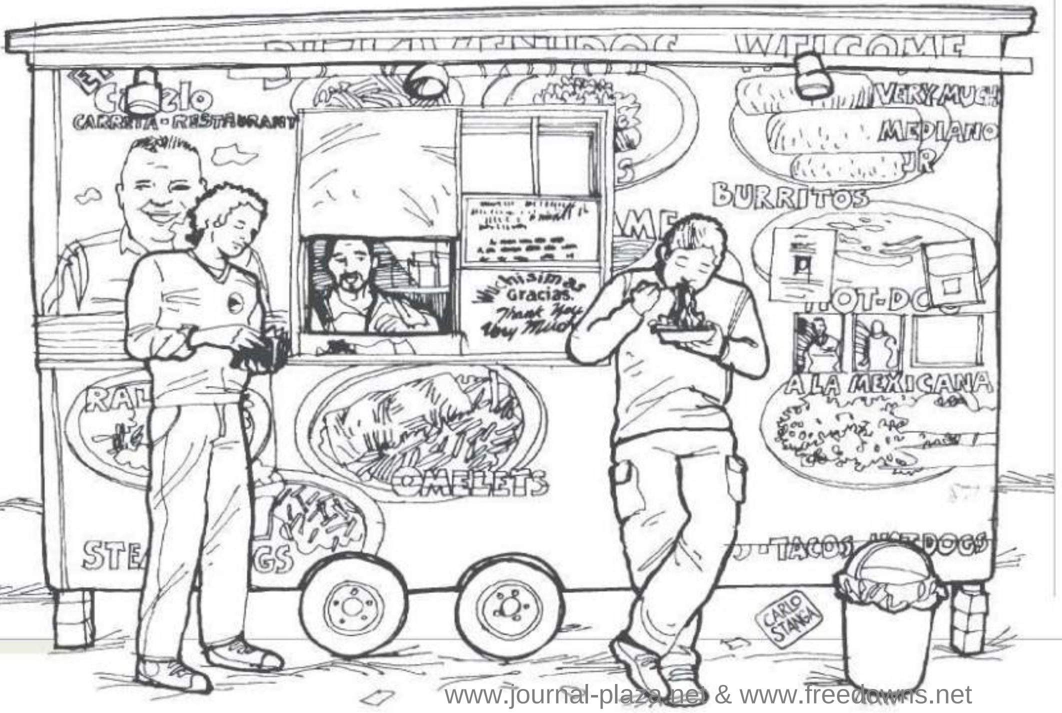
BK Carne Asada & Hot Dogs *5118 South 12th Avenue (520/295-0105; www.bktacos.com)* Order strips of spicy grilled flank steak in a taco, and graze at the spectacular salsa bar, which includes chunky guacamole and nearly a dozen other garnishes.

Juice n' Fruit *5012 South 12th Avenue (520/295-5188)* Cool off with one of the *jugos naturales y medicinales* (natural and medicinal juices), or try the "pico de gallo": melon, mango, and other fruits sprinkled with hot pepper, salt, and lime juice.

Oasis Fruit Cones *4126 South 12th Avenue (520/741-7106)* The name of this place is spot on. Here is an outdoor oasis of *raspados* (shaved ice infused with tropical fruit syrups), as well as *aguas frescas* (fresh fruit-flavored drinks) in such happy flavors as papaya, tamarind, and strawberry.

Los Jarritos *4832 South 12th Avenue (520/746-0364; www.losjarritosmexicanfood.com)* This yellow-brick eatery makes moist green corn tamales, to take home or eat hot here. The menu also includes crumbly housemade chorizo, grilled prickly pear cactus served with chiles, and *carne seca* with *refritos* (refried beans) and salsa.

Perfecto's *5404 South 12th Avenue (520/889-5651; www.perfectosrestaurant.com)* This café serves chimichangas and such local favorites as a manta ray and shrimp soup. On weekends, bring your own jug and take home some *menudo*, a tripe and hominy stew that is believed to cure a hangover.



Five to Try

Dinner Theater

Unsung and delicious food-focused films

1 Mid-August Lunch *(Italy, 2008)* This cinema verité gem, set in mid-summer Rome, follows a middle-aged slacker called upon to feed and entertain four elderly ladies. Now in U.S. theaters.

2 The Fish Fall in Love *(Iran, 2006)* In this elegy to post-revolutionary Iran, a freed prisoner returns to his house, only to find that his former lover has opened a restaurant inside it. On DVD.

3 Kitchen Stories *(Sweden, 2003)* This spoof of Sweden's social experiments in the 1950s depicts a researcher studying the kitchen habits of Norwegian men. Instead of data, he finds friendship over coffee and herring. On DVD.

4 Dinner Rush *(USA, 2001)* A winning twist on mob-movie conventions: gangland murder, gorgeous food, and Danny Aiello as a beleaguered New York restaurateur and bookie. On DVD.

5 The Great Chef: Peking Restaurant *(South Korea, 1999)* The inexperienced Yang takes over a shuttered restaurant and revives its famous noodle dish; a cinematic love letter to Korean-Chinese cooking. On DVD.

FROM TOP: JOE PATRONITE (4); COURTESY ZEITGEIST FILMS. ILLUSTRATION: CARLO STANGA/MORGAN GAYNIN

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Pizza Like No Other

A Roman shop keeps a sweet tradition alive

BLINK AND YOU might miss Pasticceria il Boccione, a tiny kosher bakery in Rome's Jewish Ghetto. But the heady scent of fresh dough, almonds, and caramelizing sugar drifting through the doorway will tell you that you're in the right place. The Limentani family has owned this shop ever since the great-grandparents of 90-year-old Grazilla Limentani, the current matriarch, started baking Roman Jewish sweets here nearly two centuries ago. Today, three generations of Limentanis do a brisk business in amaretti, cocoa biscotti, and ricotta tart with cherry preserves.

But the shop's signature is the *pizza ebraica* (Jewish pizza), which isn't a pizza at all, but rather a bar cookie studded with almonds, raisins, pine nuts, and candied citron (pictured above). While *pizza ebraica*'s origins are murky, the Limentanis suspect it was brought to Rome from Spanish-ruled Sicily in the 16th century by Jews fleeing the Inquisition. Its name was likely coined thereafter: *pizza* was a catchall term for sweet or savory pies, and *ebraica*, or "Hebraic," referred to the dish's Jewish roots.

Pasticceria il Boccione was once one of several kosher bakeries in the Ghetto. Today it is the last, serving both as a link to the past and as a gathering place for many of the 20,000 Jews living in Rome today. "If a couple gets engaged or there's an illness in a family, the news comes through the pastry shop," says Roy Doliner, the cofounder of a local Jewish association.

Grazilla Limentani, three of her granddaughters, and a niece churn out several batches of *pizza ebraica* every day to keep up with an unflagging demand for the sweets, evident in the line that often snakes out onto the Ghetto's main drag, via del Portico d'Ottavia. Beginning with a coarse mixture of flour, fat, and sugar, the bakers knead in the fruit and nuts; then they add just enough sweet marsala wine to form a soft dough, which is baked in sheet pans until the brick-shaped cookies emerge from the oven with a burnished patina that has become a Boccione trademark. Blistered and lumpy, *pizza ebraica* isn't a looker, but its salty-sweet flavor and dense texture, punctuated by tangy fruit and crunchy nuts, has won countless acolytes, including Pope Benedict XVI, who surprised the Limentanis two years ago with a thank-you note for his favorite dessert. —*Leah Koenig*

Grazilla Limentani (left) and her family with their *pizza ebraica*, above.

THE PANTRY, *page 108: Information on visiting Lima and Tucson and on where to purchase* dolsots *and Château de Fieuzal.*

PIZZA EBRAICA

SERVES 10-12

This recipe is based on one in *Cucina Ebraica: Flavors of the Italian Jewish Kitchen* by Joyce Goldstein (Chronicle Books, 1998).

- **1 cup marsala wine**
- **2/3 cup raisins**
- **4 cups flour**
- **3/4 cup sugar**
- **16 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened**
- **3/4 tsp. kosher salt**
- **1 egg white, beaten until foamy**
- **3/4 cup roughly chopped blanched almonds**
- **1/2 cup roughly chopped candied citron**
- **1/4 cup pine nuts**
- **1/4 cup roughly chopped candied cherries**

Heat oven to 475°. Put wine and raisins into a small bowl; let sit 30 minutes. Combine flour, sugar, butter, and salt in a large bowl; beat with a hand mixer until incorporated, 2-3 minutes. Add egg white; mix to combine. Stir in raisins and wine, along with almonds, citron, pine nuts, and cherries. Transfer dough to a parchment paper-lined baking sheet; shape dough into an 8" by 10" rectangle about 1½" thick. Bake until dark brown but still a little moist in center, 35-40 minutes. Let cool for 20 minutes. Cut and serve.

Child's Play The drawing at right hangs in my kitchen. It was made three years ago by Stella Bellow, a family friend who is now ten years old and is the granddaughter of the late novelist Saul Bellow. I like the drawing's flame-licked bowls and creatively spelled recipe. *Vechadable Salid Soup*, as it is titled, strikes me as a pure expression of a child's love of food, one that reveals a blossoming understanding of how meals are made. Wondering whether Stella's recipe—which calls for tomatoes, arugula, carrots, hot water, salt, cinnamon, and soy sauce—would work, I brought it to the SAVEUR kitchen staff, who happily executed a version of it, remaining as faithful as possible to its vision and estimating the ingredient amounts as best they could. This yielded a tasty soup (for a recipe, go to SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE129), one that I ate with relish, grasping the bowl like the long-haired woman depicted in the drawing, a character poised eternally in the thrall of vechadable salid soup. —*Betsy Andrews*

FROM TOP: PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; MICHAEL KRAUS

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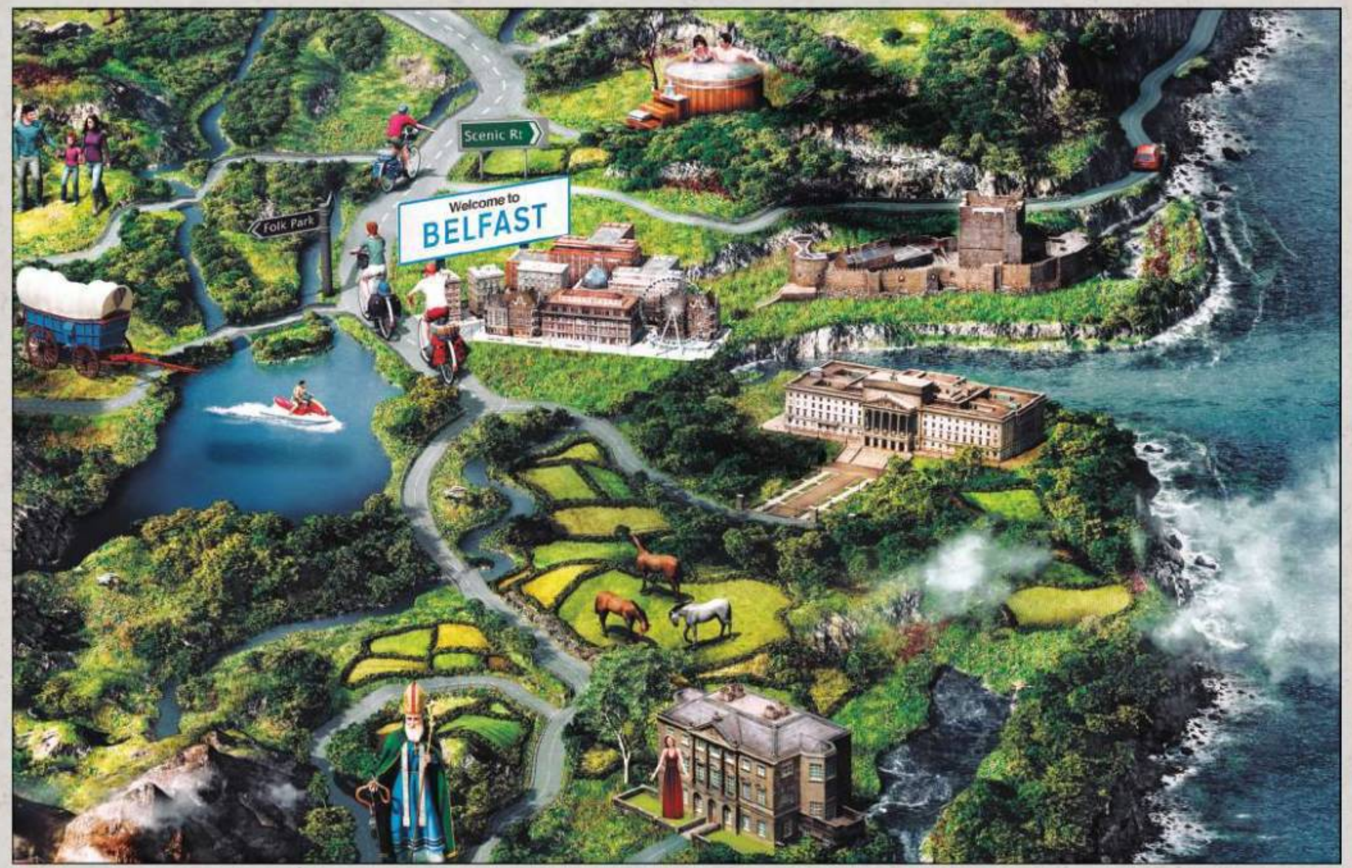

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BOOK REVIEW

The Well-Read Carnivore

The best meat books offer more than recipes

BY BETSY ANDREWS

When I was 16, I stopped eating red meat and poultry, and I didn't eat them again for 23 years. My "vegetarian" morals were imperfect, though; I ate fish, wore leather, and, during graduate school, got a job at a steak house. I had only the vaguest memory of how beef tasted, but I earned a small fortune carving slabs of it tableside. Karl Marx would have called my situation a classic case of the alienation of the worker.

Eventually, I went from working in restaurants to writing about them, and I knew it was time to start eating meat again. I eased into it: a few morsels of rib eye begged from a dinner date's plate; half a hot dog; a corned beef sandwich eaten in memory of my grandmother, with whom I'd frequented Philadelphia's Jewish delis as a child.

I started cooking meat at home, too, and quickly realized I'd picked a good moment to do so. It was the early 2000s; people were beginning to think more about where their food came from, and cookbook authors were rising to the occasion. Among the first books I turned to was *The River Cottage Meat Book* (Ten Speed Press, 2004), Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's 500-page paean to enlightened carnivorism. The recipes did more than merely list cuts of meat; I learned what part of the animal each cut came from, how it was cured or aged, and how the animal should have been raised and butchered—for its sake and for my palate's. I also loved *The Whole Beast: Nose to Tail Eating* (Ecco Press, 2004) by Fergus Henderson, the chef at St. John, London's fabled offal restaurant; his joyous embrace of the fifth quarter, as offal is sometimes called, united ethics with pleasure, showing how well one could eat by not wasting any of the animal. Those books made me a more thoughtful cook and eater of meat, and they also helped lay the foundation for the meat-centric cookbooks currently being published.

Some of the most interesting of these new releases have a strong regional bent. In **Pig: King of the Southern Table** (John Wiley & Sons, $35), North Carolina native James Villas plays Dixie compadre to Fergus Henderson. The book celebrates every part of the animal; a recipe for hog's head stew calls for the liver, heart, spleen, kidney, ear, and, yes, head (as for the brains, Villas recommends saving them to scramble with eggs). *Pig*'s 300 recipes—which crisscross the map from Smithfield, Virginia (country ham spread), to Miami (black bean and pig knuckle soup) to the Blue Ridge Mountains (pork and bacon sausage) to the Louisiana bayous (an oven-friendly version of *cochon de lait*, the traditionally spit-roasted Cajun suckling pig)—offer a thorough education in the pork-loving ways of the American South. *Pig* taught me, for instance, that because of Savannah, Georgia's role in the colonial maritime trade, folks in that city came to season their pork sausages with a veritable cargo hold's worth of spices—chile flakes, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, and more. It also proved that a Northerner like me can pull off down-home dishes like the corn pone–topped ground pork and pinto bean pie from Bryce's Cafeteria, in Texarkana, Arkansas. And it's even convinced me that there's good sense behind some fads: everything—from biscuits to Brussels sprouts—really is better with bacon.

In **Planet Barbecue** (Workman, $35), Steven Raichlen pulls back from a focus on any one region to report on grilling traditions in a whopping 53 countries, from Burkina Faso (peanut-grilled lamb) to Uruguay (a fabulous tri-tip of beef). There are recipes for flame-cooked breads, vegetables, seafood, and even desserts, but my favorites—chalk it up to the zeal of a convert—are the ones that call for meat; many

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TODD COLEMAN; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (2)

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are accompanied by handy sidebars that explain different cuts. While a few of Raichlen's preparations involve complex negotiations with the flames, others are insanely easy. There are just two ingredients in the Basque salt-crusted rib steak, and the dish's name includes them both. The hardest part might be carving the meat off the bone, but for a former steak house employee like me, it was fun—not least of all because, this time, I got to taste the fruits of my labor.

A less voracious presence than Villas or Raichlen, James Peterson, the writer of several excellent single-topic cookbooks (*Sauces*, *Fish & Shellfish*, and others), has lately turned his meticulous eye to meat cookery. He opens **Meat: A Kitchen Education** (Ten Speed Press, $35), which will hit bookstores this fall, by telling us that we should cook and eat less meat, for our health and that of the planet, but that he wants us to enjoy it more. For Peterson, that means achieving exquisite meat dishes by means of classical techniques. Aided by an abundance of photographs, all of which he took himself, the acclaimed cooking instructor does a thorough job of passing along those techniques to home cooks. I had no idea that there was such a thing as a hinged larding needle, but darned if Peterson didn't teach me how to use one to lard a braised veal shoulder. He cuts less-ambitious cooks a little slack by making some steps optional, but I found that following his full recipes to the letter paid off. When I cooked Peterson's beef Stroganoff, an unabashedly rich iteration of the dish, finished with crème fraîche, it reminded me that pleasure—mine and that of my dinner guests—was one of the main reasons why I had reembraced meat.

Having had a ball mastering the cooking of beef and pork, I decided to try my hand at game, too, thanks in large part to British cookbook authors Trish Hilferty and Tom Norrington-Davies. Their **Game: A Cookbook** (Absolute Press, $35) takes the position that the best meat for both your taste buds and your conscience comes from a wild creature. Not only has that animal roamed free and lived as it liked, but the meat is lean, pure, less expensive than many conventional store-bought cuts, and, if it was handled properly before being cooked, possessed of a mellow gaminess that enhances the meal. The book teaches readers how to roast wild birds like grouse and widgeon, make ragouts of venison and hare, and prepare wild boar vindaloo. (It also includes a section on cooking just-caught fish.) I may never confit the legs of a gray squirrel, but thanks to the chefs' sardonic British prose, I sure enjoyed reading about doing so. I did cook a stunning rabbit with sherry and wild garlic; braising and then leaving it in court bouillon overnight before gently reheating it makes for one moist bunny.

Hilferty and Norrington-Davies don't cover domesticated birds, and I needed to make a chicken stock for the rabbit, so I did what any well-connected carnivore would; I turned for advice to my favorite butchers. **Lobel's Meat Bible** (Chronicle Books, $40), by the family behind a beloved 56-year-old New York City shop, is aimed at home cooks who want to prepare uncomplicated but delectable food. Along with basics like making stocks, the book explains the principal meat cuts, their uses, and tips for talking with your butcher about them. But it's the recipes that really deliver: crowd-pleasers like Korean barbecued short ribs and a meat loaf made with pork, beef, and an egg-and-spinach stuffing. Some are so simple I found myself tweaking them like a seasoned meat cook, mixing a little *gochujang* (red chile paste) into the short ribs' marinade to jack up the heat, or adding beef broth to the meat loaf's cooking liquid for a richer flavor.

And then there's corned beef, as in those delicious sandwiches my grandmother bought for me when I was a kid. Back then, I never dreamed the meat had a history prior to the slicer. On this subject, the Lobels' book is enlightening; their home-cured corned beef (using a cardamom-spiked pickling mixture) is so easy, I couldn't help but try it. Best of all, they pair it with a recipe for a Reuben, the photograph of which shows the sandwich in all its golden, skillet-fried glory. Rarely have a few pages in a cookbook made me so happy; thanks to the Lobels, I've reacquainted myself with a childhood favorite, but now I make it from scratch.

EGG-AND-SPINACH-STUFFED MEAT LOAF

SERVES 4

The recipe for this Italian-style meat loaf (pictured on page 31) is based on one in *Lobel's Meat Bible* by Stanley, Evan, Mark, and David Lobel (Chronicle Books, 2009).

- **3 slices crustless white bread**
- **Kosher salt, to taste**
- **16 oz. spinach leaves, stemmed**
- **12 oz. ground beef chuck**
- **12 oz. ground pork**
- **4 oz. thinly sliced mortadella, minced**
- **1 cup finely grated Pecorino Romano or Parmesan**
- **1 tsp. minced fresh rosemary leaves**
- **¼ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg**
- **2 eggs, lightly beaten, plus 3 hard-boiled eggs**
- **2 cloves garlic, minced**
- **1 medium onion, minced**
- **Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **½ cup beef broth**
- **½ cup white wine**

1. Tear bread into small pieces and transfer to bowl of food processor. Process until finely ground; set aside. Bring a 4-qt. saucepan of salted water to a boil. Add spinach and cook, stirring, until just wilted, 15–30 seconds. Using a slotted spoon, transfer spinach to a bowl of ice water. Drain spinach and squeeze it with your hands to remove excess water. Set spinach aside.

2. Heat oven to 400°. In a large bowl, combine the bread crumbs with the beef, pork, mortadella, cheese, rosemary, nutmeg, beaten eggs, garlic, and onions, and season with salt and pepper. Transfer half of the meat mixture to a 9" x 13" baking dish. Using your hands, form meat mixture into a 4" x 8" rectangle about 1" thick. Arrange half of the spinach on top of rectangle in a 2"-wide strip down the middle. Arrange the hard-boiled eggs end to end on top of the strip of spinach, and top eggs with remaining spinach. Using your hands, shape the remaining meat mixture on a sheet of parchment paper into a rectangle roughly 4" x 8" and lay it over the spinach, eggs, and meat. Press the meat gently around the eggs to form a uniform loaf, pinching top half of meat together with bottom half and smoothing any seams.

3. Brush meat loaf with oil and bake for 30 minutes. Pour in broth and wine and continue cooking meat loaf, basting every 10 minutes or so with liquid, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the loaf registers 155°, about 20 minutes more. Using a spatula, transfer meat loaf to a cutting board and let rest for 5 minutes. Strain cooking liquid; set aside. To serve, cut meat loaf into thick slices, transfer to a serving platter, and spoon some of the reserved cooking liquid over the top.

FROM LEFT: TODD COLEMAN; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (2)

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REPORTER

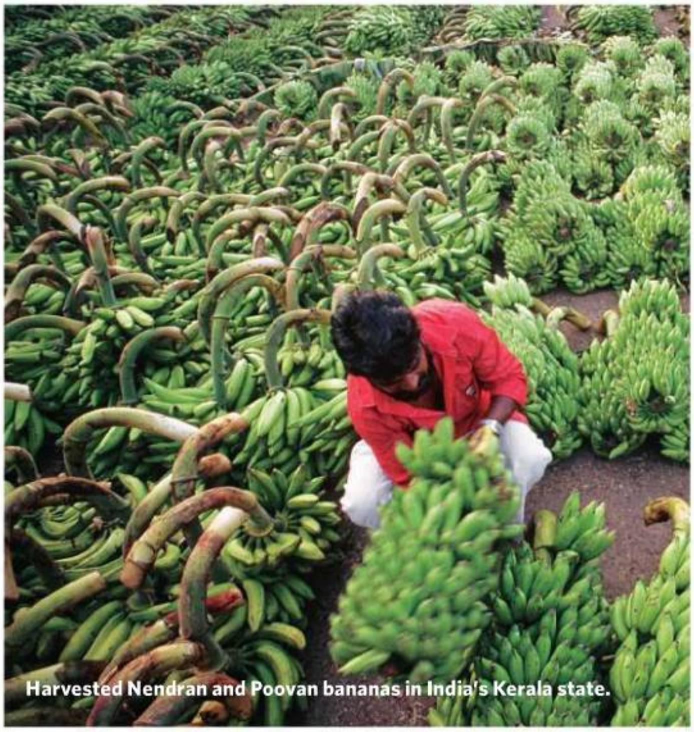
Fruit of the Future

Is the world headed for a banana revolution?

BY DAN KOEPPEL

More than a century ago, when the American palate was just beginning to develop a taste for adventure, a single entrepreneur started a revolution. He took a strange tropical fruit—a product whose very shape made it taboo—and set out to make an entire nation fall in love with it. His task extended beyond seduction. He had to invent ways to bring this perishable produce thousands of miles, from the jungles of Central America, where it was grown, to greengrocers in the United States, without its spoiling. And because he wanted to sell it to everyone—his proclaimed ambition was to make the fruit more popular than apples—he had to do all of this at incredibly low cost.

The product, of course, was the banana; the entrepreneur was Andrew Preston. He was a marketing genius. To counteract the sexual suggestiveness of the banana, he printed postcards that featured proper Victorian women dining on it. To get people to eat the fruit for breakfast, Preston persuaded cereal companies to offer coupons—the first time this was ever done—for free milk, redeemable only by those purchasing bananas with the cereal. And he published scores of recipe books containing all sorts of creative preparations (ham-and-banana scallops, anyone?). It didn't hurt that the product tasted good. Indeed, by the 1920s, Preston's mission was accomplished: the apple had fallen into second place.



Harvested Nendran and Poovan bananas in India's Kerala state.

LINDSAY HEBBERD/CORBIS

The company founded by Preston in 1899 was called United Fruit. The product it was built on is still the most popular, and most affordable, fruit in American supermarkets. We consume more of it than we do apples and oranges combined. The corporate empire Preston created has proved just as enduring, and it still sells more bananas than any other purveyor in the world. Today, the name of the enterprise is Chiquita.

But as familiar as we are with it, there's something unusual about the banana. Take a look around you the next time you're in the produce section of the grocery store. Start with those second-place apples. For a runner-up, there's a lot going on: Fujis and Braeburns and Galas, among other varieties. At my local supermarket, shoppers can also treat themselves to four kinds of orange, three cherry varieties, and two different kinds of mango. But bananas? The banana never varies. Except for an occasional oddity—a red version of the fruit, or a miniature variety—there's no choice at all: just the same, everyday partner to the cornflake.

The fruit that reinvented the fruit industry, the fruit that took risks, that dared to teach American taste buds to travel, is in a rut.

Anywhere on earth where it is warm and wet, you will find bananas. You will find them in backyard gardens in Southeast Asia and China, on farms in India, and on industrial estates in Pakistan. The fruit grows in the Philippines, Australia, Papua New Guinea, and Hawaii. It feeds millions in Africa. In this hemisphere, the fruit grows in nearly every nation south of our own.

A single, mild-tasting cultivar, called Cavendish, consti-

Dan Koeppel *is the author of* Banana: The Fate of the Fruit That Changed the World *(Hudson Street Press, 2008). This is his first story for* SAVEUR.

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tutes half of the world's banana crop, and most of those bananas are destined for export to countries and cities where the fruit can't grow. Everywhere else, you'll find local bananas—exotic to Americans, but standard, beautiful fare for the people who eat them. How many types make up the non-Cavendish half of the world's crop? Nobody knows for sure, but the generally accepted number is a thousand.

As I've discovered during several years' worth of travels while researching a book on bananas, you cannot walk ten feet in most banana-growing nations without encountering a banana or a banana tree—which isn't a tree at all but an herb, the world's largest. On a Philippine street corner, a few pennies buys a red-skinned Lacatan; to a palate accustomed to Cavendish, it is heaven: creamy and rich, with a taste like homemade ice cream. In India, where roughly 670 varieties of banana grow—more than in any other country—nearly every village has its own preferred type. The variety called Rasa Bale, from the region around the city of Mysore, has skin as thin as paper and an alluring, floral taste. Vikram Doctor, a columnist for the *Economic Times* of India who has been known to write about local bananas with the flair of a wine critic, prefers the Rasthali, whose "plumpness, almost bursting out of their skins, makes them great to bite into, and their texture is creamy, and taste complex, with interesting fruity notes." The banana capital of our own side of the world is Brazil. At a sidewalk café in the city of Manaus, I was served a pastry that tasted like apple strudel—but was filled with bananas. It was made with the Maçã variety; I found out that the Maçã belongs to an entire category of "apple bananas," whose firm texture and tartness evoke the namesake fruit.

During a trip to Vietnam, I spent a day hiking a steep mountain that rose above an island in Ha Long Bay, several hours north of Hanoi. As the trek ended, my companions and I approached a village of cinder-block houses; before each one stood a single banana tree. I stopped in front of one of the houses and inspected the fruit; it was stubby and thick, the shape of a soda bottle. After a few moments, a teenage boy peered out the front door. Then he ducked inside and returned with a plate of ripe bananas. I mimed my thanks and started peeling one. The skin was thicker than that of a Cavendish, and when I bit into the fruit, I found that the flesh didn't yield easily. This firm banana was strikingly tart, then subtly sweet. It had complexity.

I never had a chance to find out what the banana was called. But it probably wouldn't have mattered. Villages like that one generally grow one kind of the fruit, and the name the villagers usually give their variety is almost always the same: they call it banana.

AMERICANS ONCE enjoyed better-tasting bananas. The fruit that our early desires were built on wasn't the Cavendish but another variety called Gros Michel, or Big Mike. It was bigger and tougher-skinned than the Cavendish, with a more intense flavor and a smoother texture. Big Mike was a great banana. It met all the criteria Andrew Preston had needed to invent an industry. It was so rugged that it could simply be thrown by the bunch into cargo holds and shipped to American ports. For the most part, all it required was a little refrigeration to keep it from ripening too fast.

Big Mike had a problem, though. In the early 20th century, not long after Americans had become enamored of it, a mysterious disease began to destroy plantations. The malady—finally identified as a fungus and named Panama disease—was ineradicable. At first, this

Other Banana Varieties

More than 95 percent of the bananas sold in the U.S. are Cavendish, the cultivar that has dominated the market since the 1970s. But a handful of the thousand or so other banana varieties out there are becoming available to consumers in this country. For anyone accustomed to the mild taste and mushy texture of the Cavendish, many of these varieties will come as a revelation. Here are five types that can be purchased at supermarkets and specialty grocers, through mail order, or online. (See THE PANTRY, page 108, for sources.) —*D.K.*

Baby The Mini brand is trademarked by Chiquita; you'll find similar fruit sold by Dole under the Baby name. Because they're half the size of a standard Cavendish, they're generally sold as a snack product for kids. More than one cultivar makes up the Baby/Mini category. Chiquita's product is the Pisang Mas variety, originally from Malaysia; Dole's Minis include two types: Ladyfinger and Orito. The Ladyfingers are the sweetest and best tasting of them all, but since there's no reliable way to determine which kind you're getting, you'll have to undertake some delicious trial and error. These fruits must be very ripe to reach full sweetness; their skin should look deep brown, with dark streaks. Brown bananas have proven a tough sell to grocery shoppers, who tend not to let miniature bananas ripen enough and wind up disappointed. It's worth the wait.

Manzano This variety, native to Central and South America, belongs to a subcategory known as apple bananas, and the name fits. The texture of a Manzano is firmer than that of the Cavendish, and the scent is complex, marked by a strong tart-apple aroma. The taste, too, is tart—at least when you first bite into the fruit, whose flavor quickly gives way to sweetness. Though you can sometimes find Manzanos at supermarkets, Asian specialty stores are your best bet.

Burro This fruit—occasionally sold under the name chunky banana—is stubbier and fatter than the Cavendish. The Burro is grown in Mexico and is often available at Latin American markets throughout the U.S. As with many non-Cavendish varieties, you'll want to let this fruit ripen a good long while (the skin should be yellow) in order to enjoy the full extent of its sweet-and-sour taste, which I've always thought of as a cross between a lemon meringue pie and a banana cream pie.

Plantain Actually an entire subset of the fruit, plantains are a kind of banana that is usually cooked. With a few exceptions, these rarely reach the eat-raw sweetness of varieties like Cavendish (which are officially categorized as "dessert" bananas). Plantains have been on our shores longer than the Cavendish and are a cheap and delicious substitute for potatoes or rice in many Latin American cuisines. My favorite way to enjoy plantains is as Cuban-style *tostones*: just slice the fruit at a deep bias and fry the slices in peanut oil, letting them drain on paper towels; then flatten them and fry them again. You want to end up with crunchy chips that are still a bit soft on the inside. Sprinkle the chips with salt and dip them in your favorite salsa, or in a garlicky *mojo* sauce.

Red This is, in my opinion, the most delicious of the alternative banana varieties available in the U.S. Sometimes confused with a Philippine staple variety called Lacatan, the red banana has a sweet taste and a creamy texture. The ripeness of a red banana is tough to gauge; look for ones that have turned a dark magenta with streaks of umber. Their flesh bruises easily, so handle with care.

ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (5)

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TODD COLEMAN

BANANA TARTE TATIN

SERVES 6

Try using tart, apple-like Manzano bananas (see "Other Banana Varieties," page 36; see page 108 for a source) for this delicious take on the classic French dessert, which is traditionally made with apples. Standard Cavendish bananas work well too. The recipe is based on one in *Jamie's Food Revolution* by Jamie Oliver (Hyperion, 2009).

- **3/4 cup superfine sugar**
- **4 tbsp. unsalted butter**
- **1 tsp. orange zest**
- **1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon**
- **4-5 firm-ripe Manzano or standard (Cavendish) bananas, halved lengthwise**
- **1 14-oz. package frozen puff pastry, preferably Dufour brand, thawed**
- **Vanilla ice cream, for serving (optional)**

Arrange an oven rack in the top third of oven and heat oven to 400°. Cook sugar and butter in an 8" skillet over medium heat, swirling skillet often, until mixture is deep golden brown, 8-10 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in orange zest and cinnamon; pour caramel mixture into a 7 1/2" x 12" baking dish and spread to cover the bottom. Lay bananas cut side up over the caramel, cutting pieces as needed to fit in the baking dish. Unfold puff pastry sheet over bananas, trimming edges of pastry to fit the dish, and tuck in the edges. Prick pastry sheet all over with a fork. Bake until pastry is puffed and golden brown and caramel is bubbling around the edges of the dish, about 30 minutes. Transfer baking dish to a rack and let cool for 2 minutes. To serve, place a serving platter or baking sheet upside down over the baking dish and carefully invert tart onto platter or sheet. Cut tart into large squares and serve with scoops of vanilla ice cream, if you like.

was only a minor concern for growers. All that needed to be done was to move farms to virgin soil. There was plenty of land in the Latin American countries where United Fruit and its chief competitor, Standard Fruit (now Dole), operated, though that land often needed to be taken by force. (Such military interventions, assisted by the U.S. government, led to the coining of the term *banana republic*, which described a nation controlled by the fruit companies.)

But by the 1950s, new land couldn't be bought, even with blood. The banana we'd fallen in love with disappeared, a victim of a monoculture that offered no protection against disease. Its plantations devastated, United Fruit, by this time called Chiquita, was near bankruptcy. It had experimented with the Cavendish, a hybrid that was immune to Panama disease, but company executives hated the variety. Compared with Big Mike, the fruit was so bland tasting that marketers were sure American housewives would reject it. And the Cavendish had other problems. It bruised easily. It ripened too fast.

Eventually, by the 1960s, United Fruit came to terms with reality: it was Cavendish or nothing. The adoption of the new cultivar required a massive technology shift. Big bunches had to be separated into smaller ones, then bagged and boxed so they wouldn't bruise. In order to forestall ripening, a mixture of gases had to be pumped into the holds of the ships that carried the fruit to U.S. ports. As for the bananas' taste, industry heads decided that it didn't matter. To judge from the subsequent success of the Cavendish, they were right.

It's not that Americans have lost their taste for exotic produce. Chiquita and Dole, in fact, frequently import new-to-the-market tropical fruits. But a shake-up in the banana sector hasn't happened. The entire banana supply chain is tailored to Cavendish and only Cavendish, and at 60 or 70 cents a pound, that banana makes the introduction of other, less abundant kinds economically unfeasible. No other fruit costs less than bananas, and unlike the domestic farmers who have found enthusiastic customers for obscure and expensive heirloom varieties of apples or tomatoes, entrepreneurs interested in promoting lesser-known banana varieties don't have local producers to turn to—only an entrenched plantation-based industry. In the minds of fruit company executives, these facts all but guarantee that our definition of the banana will forever be equated with the single variety we've been accustomed to for decades.

Change may happen anyway. Panama disease has returned, and this time Cavendish is not immune. A variant of the fungus has begun to destroy Cavendish plantations across the globe. It first emerged in Malaysia in 1985 and has since spread to China, India, Pakistan, and across the Pacific, as far south as Australia. So far, this new version of the banana's old enemy has yet to hit Latin America, which is still the primary supplier of Cavendish bananas to the U.S. But most scientists believe that it will.

TODAY, MUCH OF THE creativity that the banana industry exhibited when it first began marketing the fruit has vanished. Nowadays bananas are anything but exotic, and much of the fruit companies' present marketing efforts are dedicated to promoting slightly pricier organic Cavendish bananas (farmed without chemicals on small farms), or to positioning the product for sale in convenience stores, as a healthful snack.

But imagine a new era. Imagine being able to serve a Ugandan *matooke*—the comforting dish of steamed plantains eaten all across Africa's central and eastern highlands—using that country's native Mongo Love banana. Imagine tasting a coconut-, cardamom-, and raisin-stuffed Nenthra Pazham from India's Kerala state, without leaving home. Imagine your kids getting their daily potassium from a sweet, bright-orange banana grown on the island of Pohnpei, in Micronesia. Cultivating such bananas would encourage growers to experiment with new shipping and ripening technologies. As with coffee, higher-priced cultivars could mean improved profit margins and better benefits for laborers. A diversified crop would provide a hedge against disease.

If the big banana producers can't do it, perhaps smaller companies can. Alternative varieties are finally making inroads via specialty distributors, and other companies are striving to improve the old Cavendish. A newly launched Florida importer has begun to sell a better-tasting version; its bananas are rush-processed and thus exposed to less taste-deadening anti-ripening gas. And there certainly must be businesspeople in India who could find a way to bring that country's considerable entrepreneurial energies to bear on its riotous stock of native fruit. Of course, conventional wisdom says that too many technological hurdles exist for a new kind of banana to make it to our shores in great numbers.

That's what they said about Cavendish.

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TOOLS

The Big Chill

Refrigerators have profoundly shaped the way we cook and eat

BY SARA DICKERMAN

Rich Allen is a refrigerator renovator in Tucson, Arizona, but he's no ordinary fix-it guy. He is the man to call if you want to install dual-temperature wine coolers inside a vintage 1909 wooden icebox, or if you want to get a working version of a jet-age Philco refrigerator that opens, vault-like, with a spin of its V-shaped handle. Once you've picked out the unrestored fridge of your dreams, Allen will customize it to your needs. He'll clean it, he'll drain any old refrigerants from the compressor, and he'll hide a new, high-efficiency unit behind it. He'll even have handles cast, polished, and gilded, if you want. For significantly less cash, Allen also sells new vintage-look refrigerators in colors like pink and teal, but he says his customers prefer restored machines over new ones at a rate of ten to one, and there's a six- to eight-month waiting list for his custom work. His craft, he says, is much like restoring old cars, except harder. After all, he says, car restorers "can buy all the parts for a '55 Chevy. We have to make them."

Allen is right to draw the comparison between cars and refrigerators: aside from the fact that brands like Kelvinator and Frigidaire were at one point subsidiaries of car companies, the two machines have played similarly significant roles in America's cultural consciousness. Both were promoted in the early part of the last century as symbols of modernity and self-reliance. Both have a history of being big, showy, and full of gadgets. And both have become so central to everyday existence that we can't imagine life without them. The fact that an entrepreneur like Allen can make a living, and a handsome one at that, renovating vintage fridges is a testament to how valued, even fetishized, this appliance has become.

Sara Dickerman*'s most recent article for* Saveur *was "Sweet, Hot" (October 2009).*

And yet, people lived without refrigeration for centuries, and still do today, all over the world. I was reminded of that fact seven years ago, when my husband and I were visiting Stone Town, on the island of Zanzibar, in East Africa. We'd ducked inside the shady arcade where the city's main fish market is located. Laid out on butcher blocks and arranged in colorful plastic pails in the equatorial heat were neatly coiled octopuses, blue-skinned fish with what looked like parrots' beaks, and silvery fish as sleek as knife blades. There were no refrigerated cases and not a cube of ice to be seen. I knew that the fish had been caught that morning, but to me the scene seemed incomplete without cooler chests or at least a bed of crushed ice. To everyone else, it was as natural as could be.

Refrigerators remain a luxury of the industrialized world. The machines are not much good without electricity, and in places that don't have a reliable power grid, many people eschew highly perishable food or eat it very quickly after it's been harvested, slaughtered, or caught. Dried grains and pulses make up a big portion of people's diet in such parts of the world, as do plantains, squash, melons, yams, cabbage, and other produce that can keep for long periods without refrigeration. Meat and milk are often sold in dried form. Interestingly, when fridges do find their way into homes in many developing countries, they're often embraced only gingerly. In the book *Fresh: A Perishable History* (Belknap Press, 2009), which documents the spread of refrigeration in the modern era, the Dartmouth geographer Susanne Freidberg notes that the few people she met while doing fieldwork in West Africa who did have home refrigerators "usually just keep their drinks in them [so] that when guests come over they can offer them cold water, or beer. Not much food, not their leftovers."

Other kinds of simpler tools designed to keep food cool have caught on in some developing countries, however, a fact demonstrated by the *zeer* pot, developed by a teacher named Mohammed Bah Abba in the 1990s in Nigeria. The device consists simply of a large clay pot nestled into a second clay pot, with a layer of damp sand separating the two vessels. Foods stored in the *zeer* pot will stay cool for days, which explains why it's proved popular with African farmers, who use it to keep their crops fresh longer, reducing the amount of surplus produce that goes unsold.

In parts of the world where the refrigerator is commonplace, people avail themselves of it to different degrees. In France, you'll find butter, cheese, eggs, and even milk, which is typically sold in a shelf-stable form, left out on the counter, and fridges there tend to be smaller than those found in the United States. Similarly, your beer might not be ice-cold at the pub in London, and your tapas in San Sebastian will have been sitting out at room temperature. Nowhere does the fridge take up quite so much space, physically or mentally, as it does in America, the earliest and most enthusiastic adopter of the appliance. We instinctively stash everything in it—even items, like bread and tomatoes, that actually taste better when stored at room temperature. A fridge's contents are seen as a reflection of who we are; no televised tour of a celebrity home is complete without a peek behind the refrigerator door.

Refrigeration is a simple concept—cooling something to a temperature below that of the outside air—and has been around for millennia. Ancient peoples realized that evaporation had a cooling effect, so they used porous, absorbent ceramic vessels and damp fabric to chill foods and beverages. They also hoarded

Facing page, a Frigidaire refrigerator, circa 1925.

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Chilling Moments

The act of refrigeration is almost as old as civilization itself. The earliest cooling techniques entailed harvesting ice and finding ways to keep it from melting. Later, people figured out that the temperature of a liquid drops as it turns to gas—the principle behind the modern fridge, in all its elegant, inelegant, and ingenious incarnations. Here, 13 technical, aesthetic, and culinary milestones on the road to cold. —*Marne Setton*

Seventh century A.D. Icehouses called *yakhchal* are built in Persia. Each domed mud building stands before a shallow, tile-lined channel. Water from a nearby stream or river is diverted inside via the channel and allowed to freeze overnight. After ice has built up over several nights, it is harvested and stored inside the dome.

1927 General Electric introduces the Monitor Top, a home fridge equipped with a compressor integrated with the body of the appliance. Less expensive than its bulky predecessors, it's an instant success. Its coolant is sulfur dioxide, a noxious gas.

1913 An inventor named Fred Wolf Jr. patents a freestanding electric compression unit that's meant to be attached to a home's icebox. He gives it the less-than-memorable name Domelre (for DOMestic ELectric REfrigerator). It can be plugged into an electric light socket.

1810s Home ice delivery catches on in America, and iceboxes (like the Seeger model, below, made in St. Paul, Minnesota) become common household items. Most consist of a zinc- or tin-lined wood cabinet containing a compartment for ice (usually delivered in large blocks) and one for food, along with a tray to catch meltwater, or holes for drainage.

1933 Guy L. Tinkham, an engineer at McCord Radiator and Manufacturing in Detroit, invents the flexible metal ice cube tray. It costs 50 cents.

1926 Clarence Birdseye invents the blast freezer, which freezes vegetables so quickly that their taste, texture, and appearance are not damaged. By the 1930s, when home fridge models with freezers are common, his namesake company sells 500 tons of frozen fruits and vegetables.

Late 1700s Iced fruit desserts become fashionable among Parisians. The refreshments, made by churning crushed fruit and ice in a saltpeter-lined bucket, are early precursors to sorbets (like the 1920s version shown above), which gain popularity during the fridge's midcentury heyday.

1970s Manufacturers release fridges, like the Moffat model, above, in "natural" colors and patterns (e.g., the faux cork on the Moffat's door pulls).

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: EMMEPI TRAVEL/ALAMY; SCIENCE AND SOCIETY/SUPERSTOCK; TODD COLEMAN; © H. ARMSTRONG ROBERTS/CLASSICSTOCK/CORBIS; ANTHONY REDPASS/CORBIS; TODD COLEMAN; SCIENCE MUSEUM/SSPL

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1933 The Crosley Radio Corporation introduces the Shelvador, which has shelves in the door and claims to increase fridge space by 50 percent.

1955 The Kelvinator company introduces the Foodarama, the first side-by-side refrigerator-freezer. The 47-inch-wide appliance has a "breakfast bar" in the door that keeps bacon, eggs, and juice handily clustered together. It also boasts a built-in plastic-wrap dispenser and an unrefrigerated drawer for bananas. The Foodarama comes in eight pastel colors, including Bermuda Pink and Buttercup Yellow.

2004 Funded by the Ben & Jerry's ice cream company, Penn State University researchers produce a freezer that cools using powerful sound waves instead of chemical refrigerants. The commercial application of thermoacoustics, as the science is called, is still being developed.

1949 The first self-defrosting refrigerator and freezer hits the market, relieving users of the recurring chore of clearing away ice buildup. It's equipped with a timer that triggers a heating element wrapped around the freezer's coils.

2000s Compartmentalization is deemed the way of the future. In 2000, GE introduces a model with discrete temperature controls for separate compartments. In 2009, a University of New South Wales design student named Angeline Meloche submits her design for the Celsius Modular fridge (right). It has fully independent drawers and cabinets that can be stacked in multiple configurations, as well as double-glazed doors that allow the consumer to see inside without letting the cold out.

snow and ice: the Chinese gathered snow at high elevations or during cold months and stored it in deep pits in the ground, and Persians built domed, insulated icehouses called *yakhchals*. But such innovations ultimately had little impact on everyday life in the epoch before mechanical refrigeration. People still dried or fermented food to preserve it, or sought cooler storage places in and around the house: root cellars, butteries, window boxes, and so on.

By the 1800s, however, large cities could no longer meet their food needs by relying solely on produce raised nearby, and growers in remote areas like Australia, South America, and California had no way of getting perishables to big-city markets without food spoiling. The early solution to these problems was ice, lots of it; new technologies were developed for harvesting and, later, producing the stuff in great quantities so that food could be packed in it and transported. Ice soon became an everyday household convenience, too; by the middle of the 19th century, many well-off city dwellers owned insulated metal iceboxes consisting of a compartment for ice and one for food. Some were sold under the name *refrigerator*—a term coined in 1803 by a Maryland engineer named Thomas Moore. To keep their iceboxes cold, people depended on regular deliveries from the iceman, who became the punch line of countless bad jokes. "Icemen had the image of being grubby and surly and unreliable and coming in with a big burlap bag full of ice and dripping water all over the floor," Susanne Freidberg says. "Relieving inconvenience for the housewife was one of the big attractions of the electric fridge."

But that would take awhile. The first machines for refrigeration were invented around the time of the Civil War; they were mechanical and powered by means of natural gas or chemical reactions. The contraptions were unreliable and enormous and were used mostly by commercial operations like breweries and ice-making facilities. As unwieldy as they were, they employed the same basic technology home fridges use today: a liquid with a very low boiling point (sulfur dioxide and methyl formate were early choices) is boiled or evaporated within a closed system, causing its temperature to plummet, thereby cooling everything around it. Over the next several decades, the technology was improved, and refrigerating machines were adapted to be used on steamships and trains. By the beginning of the 20th century, gas-powered cold-storage warehouses made it easy

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SCIENCE MUSEUM/SSPL; FOODARAMA/JOHN WILLIAMSON; COURTESY THE AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AWARDS

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Know Your Fridge Beyond putting butter in the butter compartment, vegetables in the crisper, and ketchup and mustard in the door, most of us don't think much about what goes where in the fridge. But the fact is, different foods want different levels of coldness and humidity, and that's fine, because almost every refrigerator has defined microclimates within it. Here, a breakdown of a typical refrigerator's temperature zones and what foods each is best suited to. *—S. D.*

❶ Here's a revelation: butter doesn't do best in the butter compartment, which, contrary to popular belief, isn't the warmest part of most refrigerators. In fact, the front of the top shelf is one of the coldest places, meaning it's perfect for keeping butter and eggs. Hardy fruits like apples do well in the colder back part of the top shelf. ❷ The back of the middle shelf is a cold spot, too, just right for leftovers and prepared foods, whereas the front is warmer, a good choice for beans, melons, and other produce that can be damaged by very cold temperatures. ❸ The meat drawer, usually the fridge's coldest spot, should be reserved exclusively for steaks, chicken pieces, ground beef and pork, and other raw meats. ❹ Uncooked roasts and whole poultry should be stored in a cold spot, too; keep them in the back of the bottom shelf, safely stored on a sheet pan or in a plastic container. The front of the bottom shelf, by contrast, is often the warmest zone, and thus ideal for mushrooms, corn, and other very cold-sensitive vegetables. ❺ Crisper drawers are designed to retain humidity and are a good environment for leafy greens, broccoli, and cheeses. ❻ If not butter in the butter compartment, then what? Herbs, in fact, do well in this moderately cool spot. ❼ The relatively warm top and middle shelves of the fridge door are a good home for beverages and condiments, which needn't be super-cold. ❽ The door's bottom shelf stays very cold and is the right place for milk, as well as egg- and dairy-based foods. ❾ There is little temperature fluctuation in most freezers, but there are a couple of rules of thumb: don't overstuff the compartment, and keep the foods in it thoroughly and tightly covered.

MICHAEL KRAUSS

for purveyors to store meat and other perishables for days or weeks. And yet, most American consumers still insisted on buying farm-fresh products themselves—the idea of fresh foods being stored and handled by middlemen was as alien to them as it is normal for us.

They would adapt soon enough, with the dawn of the electrical home refrigerator. The first versions, introduced around 1914, were big (often with a noisy compressor meant to be housed in the basement) and cost a bundle. But by 1927, a breakthrough was at hand. That year, the General Electric Company introduced the Monitor Top, an affordable, chest-high, enameled-steel refrigerator with an electric compressor perched atop the body of the fridge, which featured a small, aluminum-lined "freezer" compartment that got cold enough to make ice. (The first fully separate freezer compartments wouldn't come on the market until 1947.) The Monitor Top was an immediate hit. Other manufacturers quickly followed with their own innovations; in 1930, the Frigidaire company launched a comparable model, called the Hydrator, and Kelvinator came out with one called Four Way Freeze. By the end of that year, electric-refrigerator sales had surpassed those of iceboxes.

The advent of the home fridge coincided conveniently with shifts in the American diet. The discovery of the healthful benefits of vitamins in the 1910s and 1920s, for example, encouraged Americans to start eating fruits and vegetables in greater abundance and variety. Accordingly, print advertisements began depicting lots of gorgeous, colorful produce inside refrigerators. Indeed, the open refrigerator door became a sort of second threshold in the home, one that led to a vision of American plenty. Coldness took on a new aesthetic virtue, a circumstance that the essayist E. B. White alluded to in a wry 1932 *New Yorker* article: "We came on a great sight in East Twenty-first street: a stained glass window in the Rex Cole store—a heavenly refrigerator in stained glass, its door standing open, the religious light of Monday morning filtering through its shelves laden with broccoli, grapefruit, Grade A eggs and alligator pears. After all, why not? Refrigeration is our patron saint; the little cubelets of ice are our

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holy water grown cold."

Refrigerator companies spent much time and energy teaching Americans how to produce lovely food with their refrigerator, publishing cookbooks and employing home economists to proselytize on the ease, modernity, and healthfulness of a whole new range of cold cuisines. If you have ever been mystified, as I have, by the popularity of gelatin salads in the mid-20th century, consider their novelty at the time. Such a food would have been difficult to master before the arrival of the electric refrigerator—iceboxes were not as cold, and not as consistently so, as the new refrigerators. Anything gelatinous or frozen was portrayed as particularly elegant, sparkling like E. B. White's stained glass.

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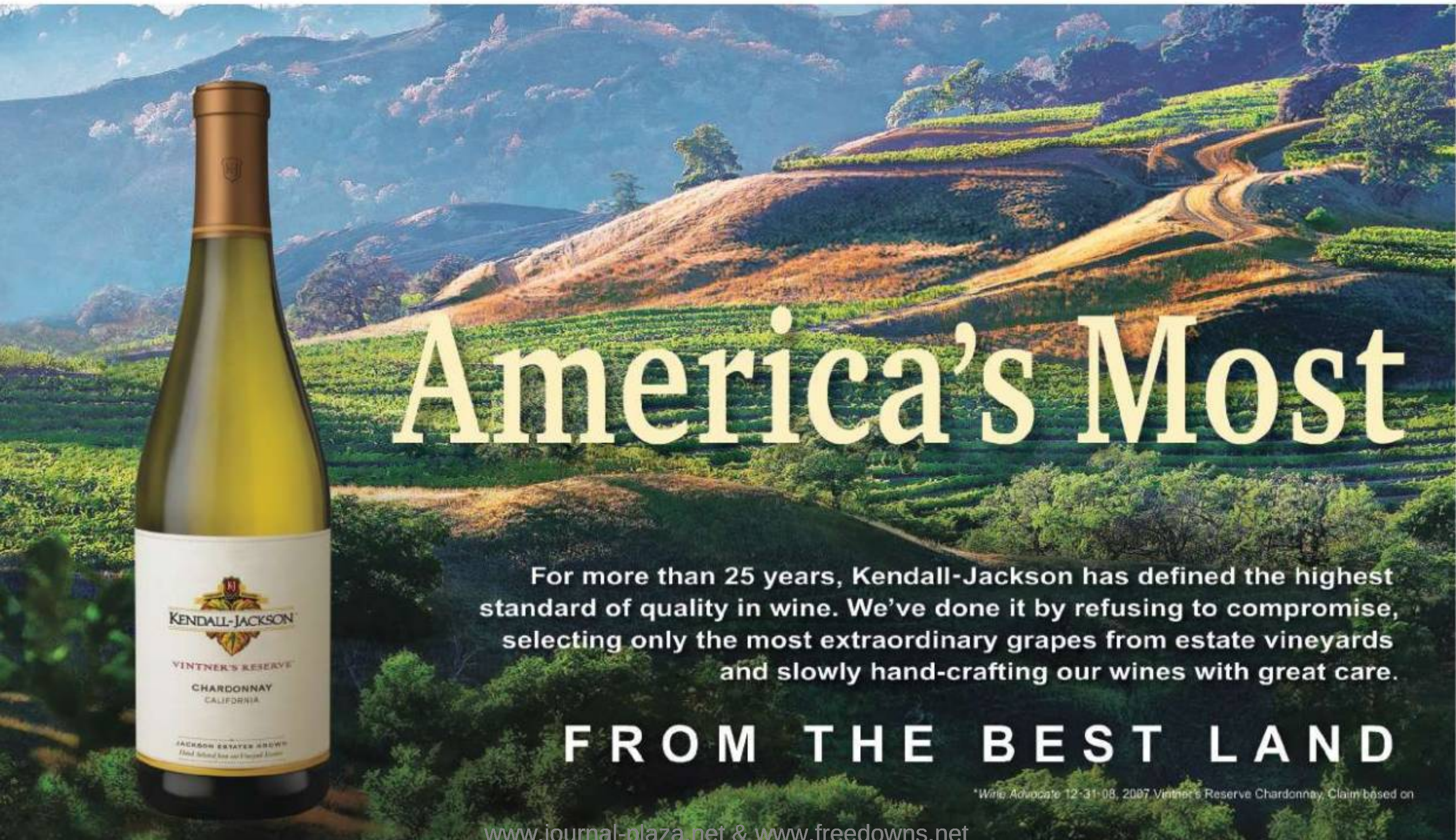
By midcentury, the majority of American homes contained refrigerators, and the look of the appliance began to change dramatically. First came the bright pink and pastel exteriors. Then came the phenomenon that the design historian Sandy Isenstadt calls "The Disappearing Refrigerator"—units designed to blend into modern home interiors like any other piece of furniture. In the late 1950s and the 1960s, Sub-Zero, a Wisconsin company, made fridges with interchangeable panels to match surrounding cabinetry and also came out with a dining-room sideboard that was actually a camouflaged refrigerator unit for storing drinks.

Things were happening inside the fridge as well. Features like crisper drawers, lazy Susans, and electrically heated "butter conditioner" compartments became commonplace. And fridges got big again. With its double doors flung open, the Kelvinator Foodarama (unveiled in 1955) was nearly eight feet wide, the appliance equivalent of Cinerama. In the 1970s, many metal parts of refrigerators were replaced with plastic, and the exterior colors shifted from pastels and fake wood veneer to tones like avocado green and harvest gold that went with nothing so well as macramé and shag carpeting. Surfaces got harder and shinier in the 1980s: black refrigerators called to mind the sleek imported electronics that were filling American homes. And as the decade went on, a curious new phenomenon emerged: people began buying stainless-steel-clad fridges that evoked the all-metal look of the restaurant kitchen—a perfect embodiment of the soaring aspirations of American home cooks.

In recent years, many consumers have not contented themselves with a mere all-purpose fridge. Taking a cue once again from restaurants, they're installing not only their own wine fridges but also ones for aging meat and cheese. Joshua Applestone, a butcher-shop owner in Kingston, New York, who teaches butchering classes for home cooks, says he gets lots of questions about meat storage and dry-aging. His advice: "Go on Craigslist and get a cheap chest fridge from an old hunter." Then, he says, install a bar and hook for hanging the meat, set the fridge to 36 or 37 degrees, and maybe install a fan inside to boost air circulation. Still want a purpose-made dry-aging chamber? The models put out by Thermo-Kool start at $3,000.

Other consumers are seeking less fridge, not more—at least in terms of energy consumption. Along with washers and dryers,



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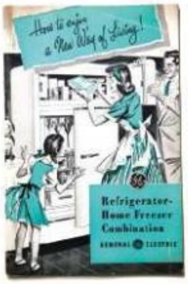
refrigerators have traditionally been the biggest energy hogs in the American home. Low-consumption models have changed that, but they don't solve a crucial problem: the fact that we all love to stare into our fridge, allowing cold air to spill out as we decide what to eat, thus forcing the appliance to work harder and consume more energy. This problem intrigued an associate professor named Ted Selker at Carnegie Mellon University's Silicon Valley campus. In 2007, he conducted studies of the ways people used their refrigerators and came to the conclusion that one way to save energy was to let people see inside the refrigerator without opening the door. He designed an experimental model that displayed a full-size digital image of the refrigerator's contents on its door as a person approached it. Nothing so smart has yet hit the market, but several companies offer models with doors made of double-walled glass that accomplish the same thing. I wonder, though, whether rummaging for a snack would be quite the same without the satisfying *sss-thunk* of a refrigerator door opening up to offer forth the bounty within.



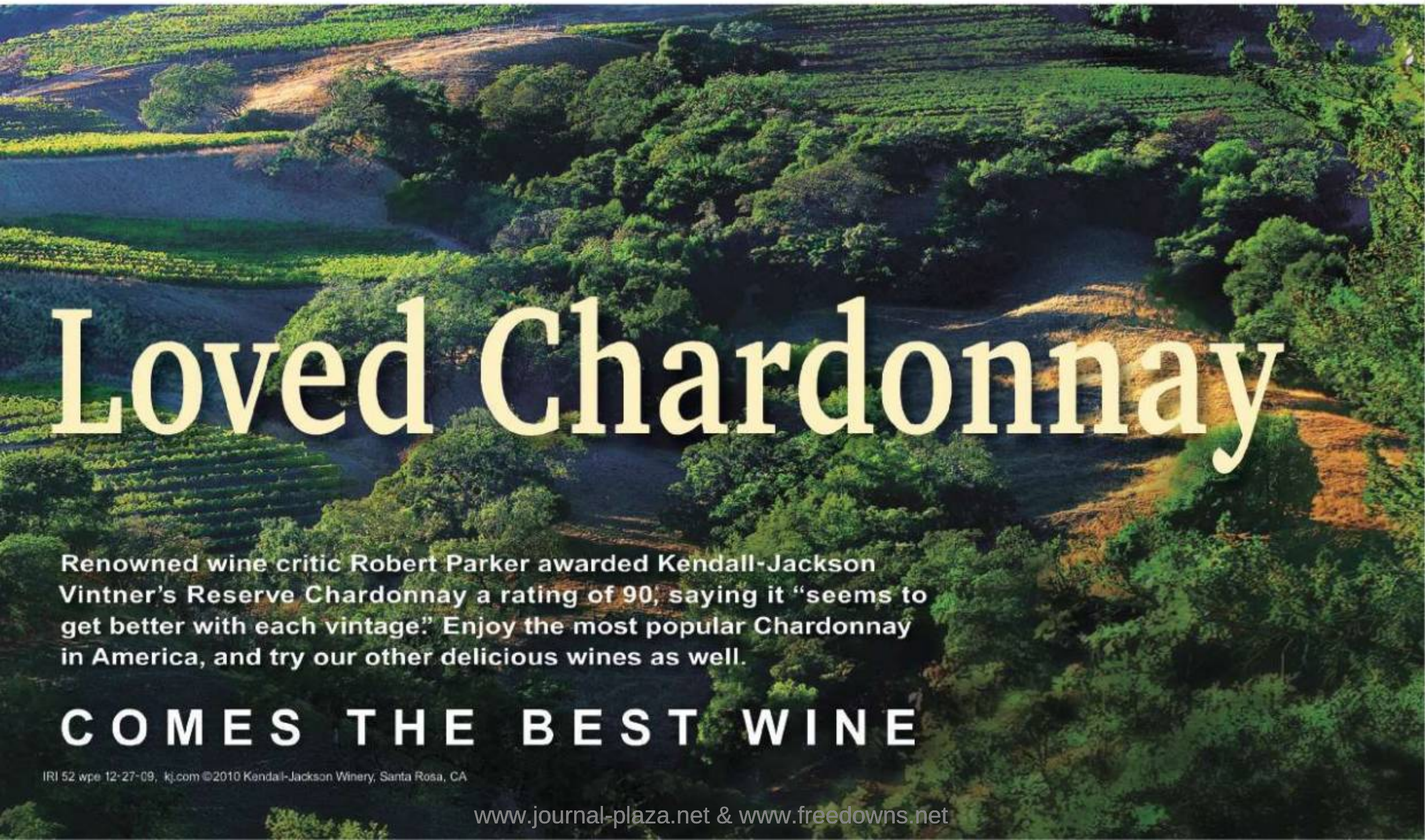
Cooking with Cold

"The hostess who entertains at a bridge party does not like to leave her guests very long in order to prepare refreshments. Here the refrigerator plays an important part," intoned a cookbook published by General Electric in 1927, the year the company had come out with one of the first popular electric home refrigerators. Soon after, other appliance manufacturers were publishing similar refrigerator-recipe brochures, with titles like *Cooking with Cold* (1940) and *How to Enjoy a New Way of Living!* (1950). Such booklets conveyed a novel principle: that the refrigerator was more than just a tool for food preservation; it was the key to an easier, more glamorous life.

Cold dishes like gelatin molds and sandwich loaves might seem passé, but back then, they were painted as the height of modern cookery—colorful, light, and easy to make ahead of time. The booklets also taught Depression- and post-Depression-era home cooks to be more resourceful with their leftover foods, as booklets like *500 Delicious Dishes from Leftovers* (1940) elevated their use to high art. A Frigidaire brochure from 1945 offered the following advice: "You can keep unused portions in your Frigidaire, and after a few days you can serve them again in an entirely different form, with just as great an appetite appeal...."

Ready-made ice was another novelty that manufacturers promoted. Take the endless suggestions for fancy ice cubes: ones studded with olives or tinted with food coloring for fanciful cocktails. Fridge cookbooks went on to suggest any number of frozen niceties: parfaits, coupes, mousses, and "frozen salads" in which canned fruits or vegetables were embedded in a frozen matrix of mayonnaise, cream, or cream cheese. In the end, some of the claims made by these brochures proved to be exaggerated (like, say, the appeal of clam juice frappé), but many of the era's recipes have stood the test of time: refrigerator cakes (those uncooked layers of fruit, cake, and gelatin) and a good cream-pie crust just won't come together without a cold blast in the refrigerator. —*S. D.*

TODD COLEMAN (3)



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CLASSIC

Elbow Room

Macaroni and cheese is a dish with hidden depths

BY BETH KRACKLAUER

Did Norman Rockwell ever pay tribute to macaroni and cheese in one of his paintings? Maybe not. But it's easy to picture: Mom in an apron at the head of the dinner table, the rest of the family leaning eagerly toward the bubbling casserole of cheese-smothered noodles she's placing before them.

Of course, like many dishes we think of as all-American, macaroni and cheese actually isn't. Italians have been eating something like it for about as long as they've had pasta. Some historians, in fact, date the dish's debut in this country to 1789, when Thomas Jefferson returned from Europe with an Italian pasta machine in tow. There's also evidence that his French chef prepared it at the White House, though he wouldn't have used elbow macaroni, which didn't enter the picture until later; back then, *macaroni* could mean any kind of dried pasta. Anyway, there were probably other, even earlier points of entry for the dish. As far back as the 14th century, the English were tossing "macrows," as they called their noodles, with butter and grated cheese. Variations on that theme would have crossed the Atlantic again and again, with immigrants from England, France, Italy, and anyplace else where the irresistible combination of noodles and cheese had taken hold.

The macaroni and cheese that I grew up with, the version widely accepted as orthodox by the late 20th century—short, hollow noodles thoroughly soused in a cheese sauce thickened with starch or eggs—was generations in the making, and the dish still retains echoes of the different eras and places it has passed through. As such, more than one method of making the cheese sauce has evolved over the years. By 1817, when *The Cook's Oracle* was published in London, the book's author, William Kitchiner, was able to gripe offhandedly, in a recipe for "Macaroni," that the "usual mode of dressing it in this country is by adding a white sauce, and Parmesan or Cheshire cheese, and burning it." By "white sauce" he meant béchamel, that blend of milk or stock and flour–butter roux that's still a common macaroni and cheese binder. Around the same time, in the American South, the celebrated hostess Mary Randolph published *The Virginia Housewife* (1824), which included a recipe for macaroni and cheese that called for steaming the ingredients in a mold like an English pudding. More important, Mrs. Randolph didn't use a béchamel; she relied on a custard of eggs and cream to bind her cheese sauce.

The béchamel-versus-custard debate persists to this day, passionately in some quarters. In *Simple Cooking* (North Point Press, 1996), for example, the Massachusetts food writer John Thorne laments the "vexatious infatuation with white sauce, a noxious paste of flour-thickened milk." I happen to be a proponent of béchamel—it makes for a reliably smooth and stable cheese sauce—though I can also see the virtue in the silky texture an eggy custard provides. The other great debate, over whether to simply mix the sauce and macaroni in a pan on the stove or to take the extra step of finishing the assembled casserole in the oven, comes down to whether you prefer a loose and gooey macaroni and cheese or one with a toasty golden top.

Convenience and necessity have also driven the evolution of macaroni and cheese in the modern era. Since the late 19th century, canned evaporated milk has made a handy replacement for cream in many custard-based recipes, and the invention of quick-cook macaroni in 1912 and easy-melting Velveeta cheese in 1928 brought macaroni and cheese fully in line with the demands of the age, whether that meant feeding a family or an army. Then, in 1937, came the little blue box that would change the way Americans ate macaroni and cheese—and the way they ate, period. Kraft Dinner (later renamed Kraft Macaroni & Cheese), the prepackaged kit of powdered cheese and dehydrated pasta, is an artifact of the Depression, when "a meal for four in nine minutes for an everyday price of 19 cents" would have sounded pretty appealing. It was during those years that macaroni and cheese graduated from side dish to main course, and though cooks continued to make it from scratch, the packaged version has since become the formative mac and cheese experience for many Americans. My parents, who have vivid—maybe too vivid—memories of Depression-era meals, never served the Kraft version; they preferred the frozen macaroni and cheese introduced by Stouffer's in 1954.

Growing up, I loved Stouffer's plush version, with its crunchy baked top, but I was outright ecstatic on the days when my older sister would pick up a box of Kraft on the way home from school; I never tired of watching the transubstantiation of orange powder into luscious sauce on the stove top. At friends' houses, I discovered such exotic additions as hot dogs, tuna fish, broccoli, or cream of mushroom soup. There were the "healthy" versions made with whole wheat macaroni or margarine or low-fat cheese; the "gourmet" adaptations that replaced elbow macaroni with *rotini*, or Velveeta with Swiss raclette; and the dense squares I tried in the Caribbean, where the dish goes by the name macaroni pie.

Often my mom would forgo the Stouffer's and make her own mac and cheese, with sharp cheddar and a satisfying golden crust, and that's the one I usually aim to reproduce in my own kitchen. I begin by scalding some milk and letting a bay leaf steep in it while I cook the pasta to just shy of al dente, so that it can absorb some of the cheese sauce as it bakes later on. Then I make a roux, steadily whisking flour in butter

Facing page, Southern-style macaroni and cheese (see page 50 for a recipe).

ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

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until it turns a golden blond color—and no darker. (Too much browning, and the starch in the flour breaks down, making for a less stable sauce.) Then I whisk in the hot milk and grated cheese, stir in the pasta, pour it all into an ovenproof dish, and bake.

Once you've mastered the basics, you can expand the dish's horizons in all sort of ways. I mix a pinch of cayenne into the roux to let the spice bloom in the butter; nutmeg and paprika are other classic seasonings, and a little mustard or blue cheese will enhance the overall zing. A scattering of buttered bread crumbs or Japanese panko makes for a crisp topping. Starting with a base of caramelized onions or minced shallots—à la *käse spätzle*, the Mitteleuropean answer to macaroni and cheese—is an excellent way to build flavor. I discovered that sour cream contributes a tangy richness when I tried the recipe for custard-based macaroni and cheese in Edna Lewis and Scott Peacock's *The Gift of Southern Cooking* (Knopf, 2003), and I gained a new respect for Velveeta thanks to SAVEUR's executive food editor, Todd Coleman, who showed me that including it in a mix of cheeses can yield a super-velvety sauce. I've even experimented with macaroni and cheeses loaded with big-ticket ingredients like lobster and cognac. And anyone who opposes adding smoky ham or bacon can only be doing so on ethical or religious grounds.

Still, at its core, macaroni and cheese is about, well, macaroni and cheese, and my favorite versions are the ones that make the most of those two components. Think about how, in a good macaroni and cheese, the hollow elbows nestle together to form a beautiful, springy honeycomb structure. At Artisanal, a cheese-centric New York City brasserie, chef Terrance Brennan refines that already elegant design by replacing macaroni with *penne rigate*, which has a grooved surface that really holds the cheese sauce. "I also use four different cheeses," he says; "fontina for creaminess; Gruyère for its earthy flavor and hint of Alpine grasses; Comté for nuttiness; and Parmesan, in the topping, for that umami quality." But ask Lyra Petrie, the owner of Ginger Root, a Caribbean café near my Brooklyn apartment, and she'll tell you that a sharp cheddar is all you really need. "As long as you use a quality cheese, you can't go wrong," she assured me the last time I stopped in for a helping of her custardy, nutmeg-spiced macaroni pie. The best part is, they're both right.

FOUR-CHEESE MACARONI AND CHEESE

SERVES 6–8

The secret to this ultracreamy macaroni and cheese (pictured on page 52)? A little Velveeta mixed in with the other cheeses.

- **Kosher salt, to taste**
- **8 oz. hollow pasta, preferably elbow macaroni or shells**
- **3 slices crustless white bread**
- **6 tbsp. unsalted butter**
- **½ tsp. paprika**
- **3 sprigs fresh thyme**
- **2 shallots, minced**
- **1 bay leaf**
- **¼ cup flour**
- **⅛ tsp. cayenne pepper**
- **3 cups milk**
- **10 oz. grated sharp white cheddar (about 4 cups)**
- **10 oz. grated Gruyère (about 4 cups)**
- **6 oz. Velveeta, cut into ½" cubes (about 1¼ cups)**
- **1 oz. blue cheese, crumbled (about ¼ cup)**
- **Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

❶ Heat oven to 375°. Bring a 4-qt. saucepan of lightly salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook, stirring occasionally, until cooked halfway through, about 3 minutes for elbow macaroni. Drain pasta; set pasta aside. Tear bread into small pieces and transfer to the bowl of a food processor. Process until finely ground; set aside. Return pan to medium heat and melt 3 tbsp. butter. Add bread crumbs and stir to combine. Transfer bread crumb mixture to a plate and set aside.

❷ Wipe out pan and set over medium heat. Melt the remaining butter and add the paprika, thyme, shallots, and bay leaf; cook, stirring often, until shallots are soft, about 5 minutes. Add flour and cayenne and stir until mixture thickens, 1 minute. Whisk in milk and cook, continuing to whisk often, until sauce has thickened and coats the back of a spoon, about 10 minutes. Discard thyme and bay leaf and remove pan from heat. Stir in cheddar, half the Gruyère, the Velveeta, and the blue cheese; continue stirring until smooth. Stir in pasta and season sauce with salt and pepper. Transfer mixture to an 8" x 8" baking dish. Sprinkle remaining Gruyère over top of pasta and then top with bread crumbs. Transfer baking dish to an aluminum foil-lined baking sheet and bake until macaroni and cheese is golden brown and bubbly, 30 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes before serving.

SOUTHERN-STYLE MACARONI AND CHEESE

SERVES 8–10

The recipe for this dish (pictured on page 49) is based on one in *The Gift of Southern Cooking* by Edna Lewis and Scott Peacock (Knopf, 2003).

Built to Please As you prepare, say, the four-cheese macaroni and cheese described above, you're actually pulling off an intricate choreography of chemical processes. Boil macaroni, and the heat will cause starch molecules to relax their crystal structure and absorb water. It's called gelatinization. The macaroni swells, and if you stop short of al dente, you'll allow those starch molecules to take in additional moisture from the sauce later. You're gelatinizing again when you make the roux and béchamel; the objective in this case, according to Paula Figoni, a professor of food science at Johnson & Wales University, is to "separate and coat flour particles with fat so that when the starch in the flour gelatinizes, it does so evenly." The result? A smooth sauce that won't break when cheese is added.

The kind of cheese you choose matters, too. The proteins in an aged one will have broken down a bit, which makes them better able to emulsify in the sauce. (In the case of Velveeta, emulsifying salts are added to make the proteins more soluble.) If you bake your mac and cheese, another process takes place: the Maillard Reaction, in which amino acids and sugars react in the presence of heat to produce toasty, nutty flavors. "Macaroni and cheese has an ideal mix of compounds present for the Maillard Reaction," says Lloyd Metzger, Alfred Chair in Dairy Education at South Dakota State University. "And when the macaroni and cheese is heated a second time, a new group of flavor compounds are created." What's more, the gelatinization you initiated in the macaroni the first time around will have, over a day in the fridge, given way to retrogradation, in which the starch molecules align and form hydrogen bonds, giving the pasta an enhanced, toothsome firmness. Thus macaroni and cheese's capacity to taste even better, and more complex, the next day is built into the ingenious design of the dish. Fresh or leftover, it really is the perfect food. —*B.K.*

TODD COLEMAN

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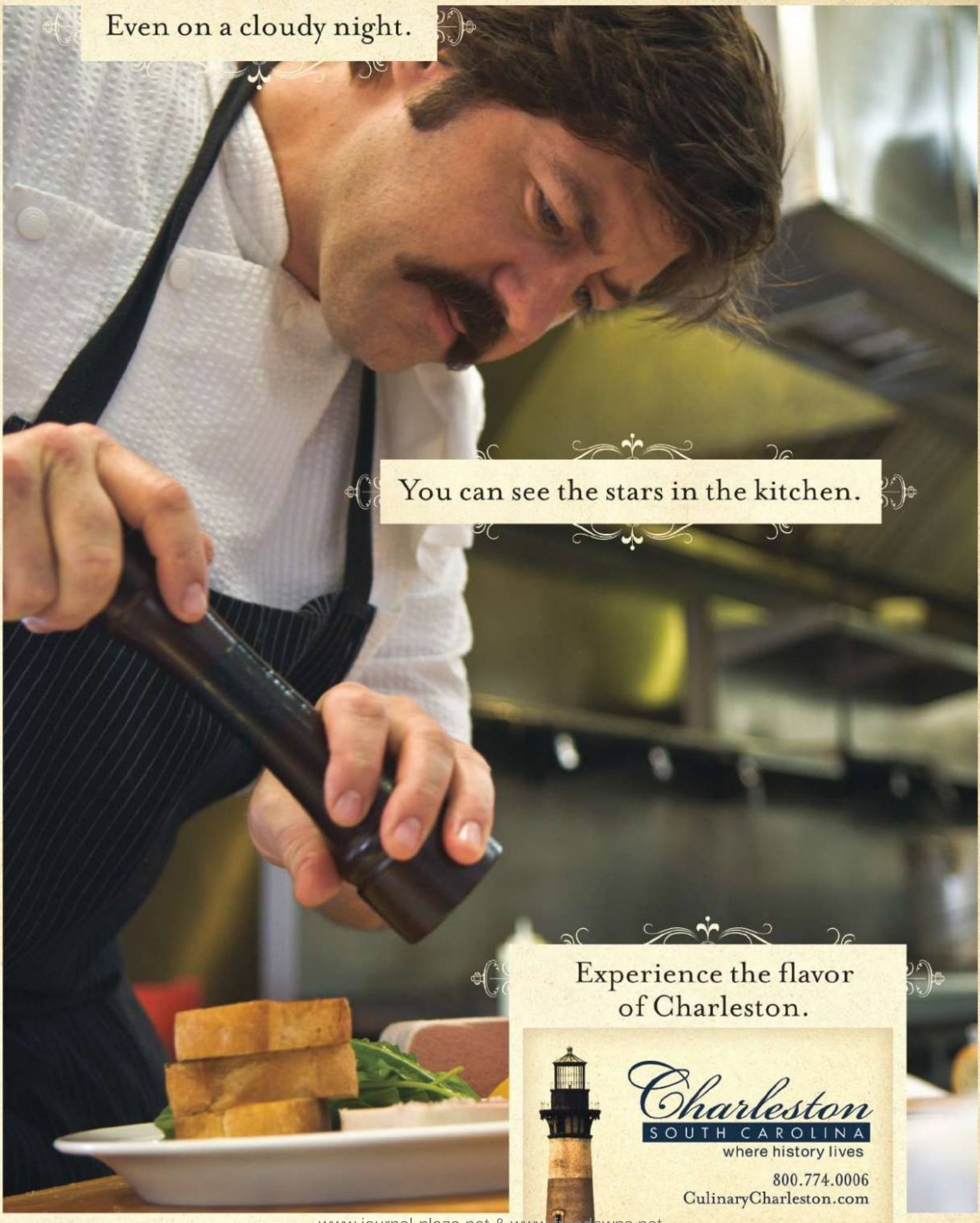

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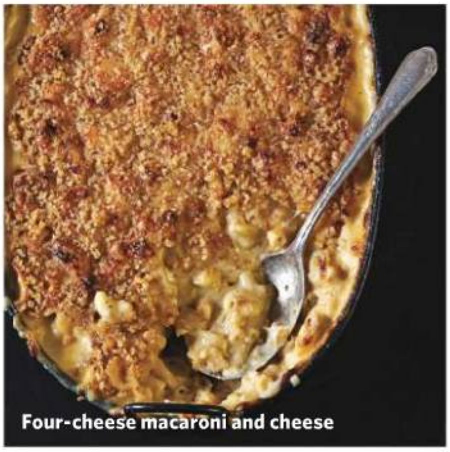
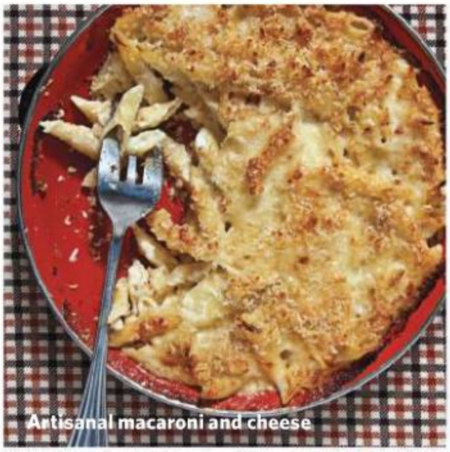

Four-cheese macaroni and cheese

Lobster macaroni and cheese


Artisanal macaroni and cheese

- 1½ tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 8 oz. hollow pasta, preferably elbow macaroni
- Butter, for greasing
- 7 oz. extra-sharp cheddar, cut into ½" cubes (about 1½ cups), plus 6 oz. grated (about 2 cups)
- 2 tbsp. plus 1 tsp. flour
- 1½ tsp. dry mustard
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- ⅛ tsp. cayenne pepper
- ⅔ cup sour cream
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1½ cups half-and-half
- 1½ cups heavy cream
- ⅓ cup grated onion
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire

1. Heat oven to 350°. Bring a 4-qt. saucepan of salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook until cooked halfway through, about 3 minutes. Drain pasta and transfer to a greased 9" x 13" baking dish. Stir in the cubed cheddar cheese and set aside.

2. Combine 1½ tsp. salt, flour, mustard, black pepper, nutmeg, and cayenne in a large mixing bowl. Add the sour cream and the eggs and whisk until smooth. Whisk in the half-and-half, heavy cream, onions, and Worcestershire. Pour egg mixture over the reserved pasta mixture and stir to combine. Sprinkle the grated cheese evenly over the surface. Bake until the pasta mixture is set around the edges but still a bit loose in the center, about 30 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes before serving.

LOBSTER MACARONI AND CHEESE

SERVES 8–10

This dish (above, center) is served at Macbar, a Manhattan restaurant whose menu lists a dozen mac and cheese variations.

- Kosher salt, to taste
- 12 oz. hollow pasta, preferably elbow macaroni
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter
- ¼ cup flour
- 4 cups milk
- 11 oz. grated fontina (about 4 cups)
- 8 oz. mascarpone (about 1 cup)
- 3 tbsp. lobster or fish broth
- 3 tbsp. brandy or cognac
- 1 tsp. Tabasco
- ¼ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 8 oz. cooked lobster meat, cut into 1" chunks
- ⅓ cup minced chives
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced crosswise
- 2 oz. grated sharp aged white cheddar (about 1 cup)

1. Heat oven to 375°. Bring a 4-qt. saucepan of salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook, stirring occasionally, until cooked halfway through, about 3 minutes. Drain pasta, transfer to a bowl, and set aside.

2. Melt butter in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium heat. Add flour and cook, whisking constantly, until smooth, about 1 minute. Whisk in milk and cook, continuing to whisk often, until sauce has thickened and coats the back of a spoon, about 10 minutes. Remove pan from heat and stir in 2 cups fontina, along with the mascarpone, broth, brandy, Tabasco, and nutmeg; season with salt and pepper. Add reserved pasta to cheese sauce. Stir in half each of the lobster, chives, and scallions. Transfer mixture to a 9" x 13" baking dish and sprinkle with remaining fontina and the cheddar. Bake until golden brown and bubbly, about 30 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes. Garnish with remaining lobster, scallions, and chives.

ARTISANAL MACARONI AND CHEESE

SERVES 6–8

Chef Terrance Brennan of the Manhattan restaurant Artisanal uses penne instead of the standard elbow macaroni for his take on the dish (above), which is topped with a crisp panko-Parmesan crust.

- Kosher salt, to taste
- 12 oz. hollow pasta, preferably penne
- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter
- ¾ cup dried bread crumbs, preferably panko
- 1 oz. finely grated Parmesan (about 1 cup)
- ¼ cup flour
- 3½ cups milk
- 4 oz. grated Gruyère (about 1½ cups)
- 4 oz. grated Comté or Cantal (about 1½ cups)
- 4 oz. grated fontina (about 1½ cups)
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1. Heat oven to 350°. Bring a 4-qt. saucepan of salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook until not quite al dente, about 7 minutes. Drain pasta, transfer to a bowl, and set aside.

2. Melt 3 tbsp. of the butter in a 4-qt. saucepan over low heat. Add the bread crumbs and Parmesan, toss to combine, and transfer to a small bowl; set aside. Wipe out the saucepan and set over medium heat. Melt the remaining butter and whisk in the flour until smooth. Whisk in the milk and cook, continuing to whisk often, until the sauce coats the back of a spoon, about 10 minutes. Stir in the Gruyère, 1 cup of the Comté, and 1 cup of the fontina and whisk until the cheese is melted and incorporated. Season with salt and pepper. Remove pan from heat and stir in the reserved pasta. Pour the mixture into a 2-qt. baking dish and top with the remaining Comté and fontina. Sprinkle bread crumb mixture over the top and bake until golden brown and bubbly, about 30 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes before serving.

FROM LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; TODD COLEMAN (2)

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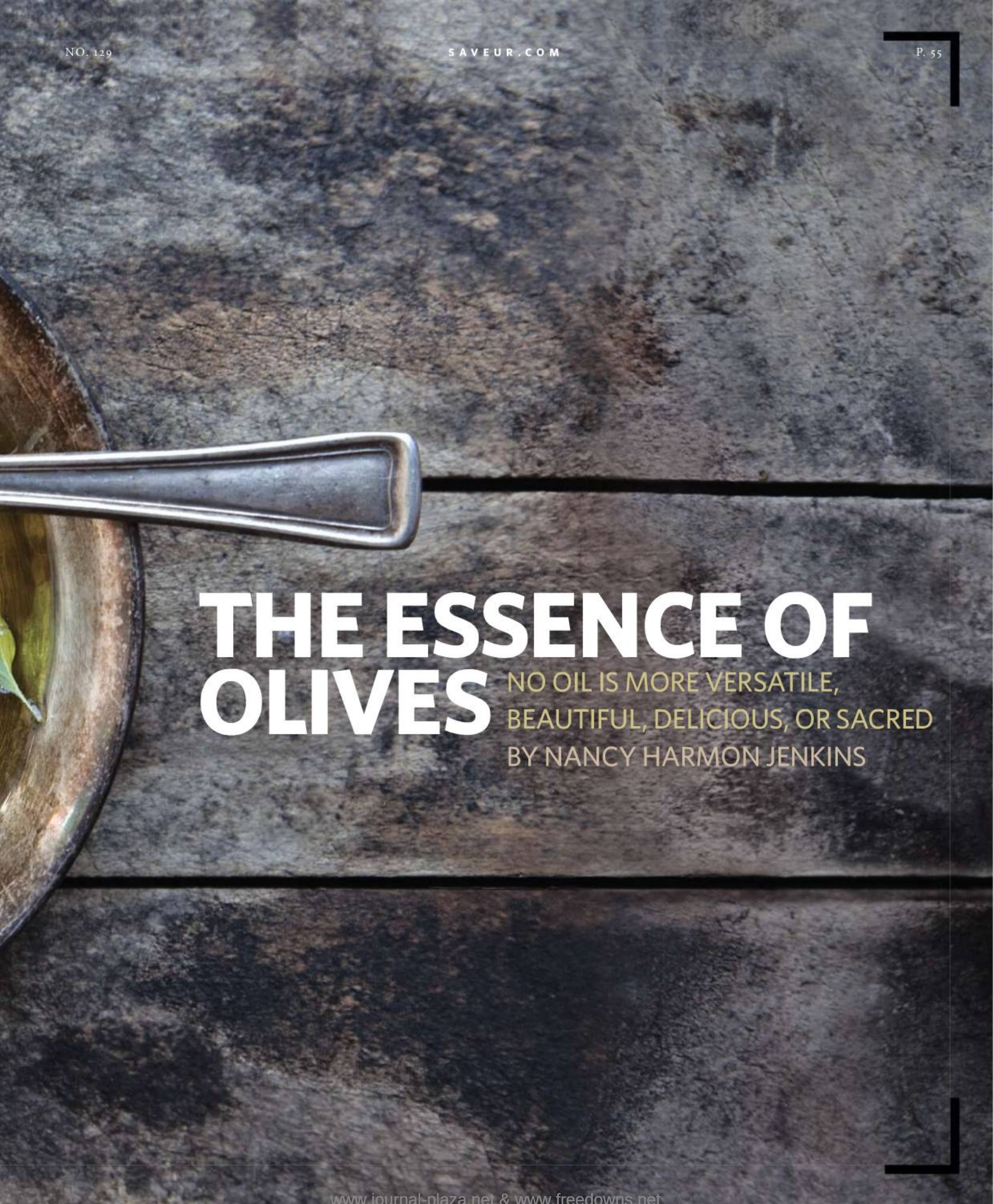

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BY NANCY HARMON JENKINS

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Steak with herb sauce. Previous pages, herb and chile oil. (See pages 69 and 72 for recipes.)

TODD COLEMAN

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YOU'RE NEVER TOO YOUNG TO learn about olive oil. In Italy, Greece, and other parts of the world where it is the very foundation of cuisine, newborns' lips are often smeared with a little extra-virgin olive oil, even before the first taste of mother's milk, just to make sure the babies get their priorities straight. Last fall I watched my two-year-old grandson stick his forefinger into a stream of our own oil as it flowed from the presses near our home outside Cortona, in Tuscany. He licked his finger and smiled broadly. ❧ I tried a taste and smiled, too. The freshly pressed oil had a bittersweet, vegetal flavor that I still can't quite describe. Almonds? Walnuts? Artichokes? Crushed grass? Green apples? Tomato leaves, perhaps? A little of all those and something more? When it's oil from your own orchard, pressed from olives you harvested painstakingly over several days while keeping a wary eye on the rain-soaked clouds piling up in the west, then it truly seems like a miraculous substance.

You're never too old to learn about olive oil either. Unlike my grandson, I was not born to like the stuff. No one smeared it across my infant lips; in fact, in my mother's house in Camden, Maine, the place for olive oil—a very small bottle of it—was not the kitchen cabinet but the medicine chest, where it was kept on hand as a salve for dry skin.

It was a long time before I discovered what I'd been missing. Even in Spain, where I lived in the late 1960s, olive oil was no treasure. Although almost universally used, it was also almost universally bad, unless you produced it yourself. The olive oil industry was regulated by the government, leaving little incentive to put out a good product, and the market was flooded with shoddy, poorly treated oil. How things have changed since then; today, Spain is the world's largest producer of extra-virgin olive oil and makes some of the finest oils anywhere.

It was not until I moved to Lebanon in the early 1970s—my husband was a foreign correspondent whose posting changed every few years—that I discovered the miracle substance that is good olive oil, and when I did, my conversion was total. Each winter in Beirut, the rich, thick, green oil from ancient groves all across Lebanon's mountains and valleys flowed into city markets. It had an eye-opening, palate-rousing flavor, especially when combined with crushed garlic and fresh lemon juice, and poured over a plate of tabouleh, that salad of bulgur mixed with parsley, tomatoes, and other ingredients. During autumn, I joined friends on trips back to their family farms to share in the harvest and stock up on a year's supply of that fabulous oil.

In the years that followed, I learned all I could about the history and uses of olive oil, and how it all comes together in the kitchen and at the table. At the same time, I discovered the considerable health benefits of extra-virgin olive oil, the most traditional and least processed kind, and why it's such a crucial part of the Mediterranean diet. But it was not until I decided to plant 150 or so olive trees on a farm my family had bought high in the hills between Tuscany and Umbria that I gained a truly deep understanding of this food. The trees took root, and for many years I watched them grow, waiting for them to reach fruit-bearing age. In 2006, we finally had a large enough crop to harvest and press into oil. It was just a little oil at first—a mere 15 liters—but the thrill of that first real harvest, and every harvest since, did more than anything else to teach me about olive oil. Still, whenever I start to feel like an olive oil expert, I discover something new and unexpected about this versatile product: a delicious oil made from a kind of olive I'd never heard of, a newly revealed health benefit, terrific oils in up-and-coming regions (as in California, where they're making some of the most interesting oils I've ever tasted). What other ancient food still has such power to surprise and inspire?

FROM OLIVE TO OIL

75% of the world's olives are used to make olive oil. The remaining 25% are cured or brined to be used in cooking, drinks, or as snacks.

SOURCE: INTERNATIONAL OLIVE COUNCIL

IT'S BEEN A GOOD 30 YEARS since Americans first started embracing olive oil in earnest; indeed, you could say it was olive oil that fueled the American gastronomical revolution, bringing with it a love for a whole panoply of Mediterranean ingredients. Almost overnight, gourmands went from using butter with abandon to keeping several olive oils on pantry shelves, recruiting a light version from Provence or a peppery one from Tuscany, depending on the dish at hand. Cooks in the United States were charmed by the oil's clean, complex flavor and positively ecstatic that it happened to be good for you, too. Indeed, extra-virgin olive oil—a category that encompasses the highest-quality oils, ones pressed from freshly harvested olives without the use of chemicals or solvents—is an almost perfect food. A monounsaturated fat, olive oil lowers harmful LDL cholesterol while maintaining or even increasing HDL, the "good" cholesterol. Recent studies also indicate that extra-virgin olive oil, rich in antioxidants called polyphenols, naturally boosts protection against chronic degenerative illnesses—cardiovascular disease, diabetes, some types of cancer, possibly even Alzheimer's disease.

But as much as I love extra-virgin olive oil for *(continued on page 61)*

NANCY HARMON JENKINS *is the author of* The Mediterranean Diet Cookbook *(Bantam, 1994). Her most recent story for* SAVEUR *was "Home Grown" (August/September 2009).*

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TREE OF LIFE

You plant grapevines for your children, my Tuscan neighbors say, and olive trees for your grandchildren. It can take as long as 40 years for *Olea europaea*, the olive tree, to grow to full maturity (though many begin bearing fruit after just five to seven years). Once planted, however, barring frost, fire, or flood, the tree can live for centuries, its taproot stretching deep—up to 20 feet—into the soil, seeking moisture. All over the Mediterranean—from Andalusia in Spain (where this photo was taken) to Puglia in Italy to Kalamata in Greece—you'll find ancient, gnarled trees still faithfully producing delicious fruit every fall.

The olive tree is as deeply embedded in the history and mythology of olive-growing lands as it is in the landscape itself. Olive trees may have originated in the Middle East, possibly in what is now Syria, but as they moved west with human settlement, into Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Italy, southern Spain, and North Africa, their bounty made a deep impression on the people who lived in those places. The trees' fruit and the oil it produced were considered nothing short of miraculous. The oil was used as a food and also as a balm for the ill, an unguent for cleansing the skin, and fuel in lamps.

The three great Abrahamic faiths—all rooted in lands where olive trees grow—pay heed to the trees' gifts: it's no accident that olives provide the chrism, or consecrated oil, used in Greek and Latin churches for baptisms and ordinations. Or that the miracle celebrated at Hanukkah commemorates a spontaneously replenished supply of olive oil in the lamps that lit the Temple of Jerusalem. Here is the tree again, in the Koran: "A sacred tree . . . [whose] oil almost gives light of itself though no fire touches it."

Today, the olive tree has spread far afield—to North and South America, Australia and New Zealand, India and China. But wherever its split trunk rises and its knobby, twisted branches and silvery leaves cast shade, the olive tree remains a beloved and quintessential symbol of the Mediterranean, its historic home. *—N. H. J.*

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ZOHRA BENSEMRA/CORBIS

FROM TREE TO TABLE

The processing of olives to make oil follows age-old methods. The best olive oil is usually pressed from fruit that is just beginning to turn from green to reddish brown, a stage that Italians call *invaiatura*, literally "darkening." Oil from olives at this stage has a pleasing pungency and bitterness, an indication of the presence of polyphenols, natural compounds that help protect the oil from rancidity and give it a complex flavor. Today, growers around the world schedule their harvest so that olives can be pressed quickly, ideally within 24 to 48 hours of being picked. The most common pressing method uses continuous-cycle machinery: olives are dumped into steel chambers, crushed into paste by metal hammers or disks, forced through a kneader that begins to extract the oil, and sent to a centrifuge to separate out solids and water. Some mills, like the one featured above in Bejaïa, Algeria, still do things the old-fashioned way: crushing olives in a basin with giant stone wheels and then spreading the paste out on woven grass or nylon mats. The mats are stacked atop one another and compressed in a hydraulic press that slowly extracts the liquid, which drips into a tank below; the oil, which rises above any water, is ladled off the top. Though picturesque, the old pressing method has a downside: it exposes the olive paste to the open air for hours, causing oxidation and raising the potential for rancidity. —*N. H. J.*

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(continued from page 57) its health-promoting attributes, I love it even more for what it does in the kitchen. The Mediterranean is the historical home of olive cultivation, and for me the Mediterranean table has always been the best place to learn about the oil's astonishing versatility. In Cyprus, I learned how to mix olive oil, thick yogurt, some minced garlic, and chopped cucumbers to make a quick, refreshing *tzatziki* dip—an essential component of any meze, or appetizer, spread. I never understood how glorious a simple salad dressing could be until a Palestinian cook taught me to crush garlic with some salt, mix olive oil with a little fresh lemon juice, and toss it all together with whatever greens happen to be on hand. In the south of France I learned about the wonders of tapenade, that salty black-olive relish; of garlicky aïoli; of tangy, anchovy-rich *anchoïade*; and of the other olive oil–based sauces cherished in that region.

All too often I hear American friends claiming that you shouldn't cook with extra-virgin olive oil and should reserve it for salad dressings and other fresh preparations. But in the Mediterranean, chefs and home cooks wouldn't dream of sautéing, braising, and even deep-frying with anything else. On one visit to Andalusia, the region in the south of Spain that produces 80 percent of that country's olive oil, I consumed crisp *churros*, long twists of dough fried in extra-virgin olive oil, for breakfast, then had a late-morning snack of calamari fried in olive oil as well. The fact is, most extra-virgin olive oils work for high-temperature techniques like frying and searing just as well as other cooking oils. On this subject, I often like to quote the grande dame of Mediterranean cooking, Elizabeth David: "For the deep frying of fish," David wrote in *French Provincial Cooking* (Michael Joseph, 1960), "there is no other fat to compare with it. Nothing else makes it so crisp and crackling.… For this reason you will nearly always find that an Italian, a Jewish, or a Provençal cook will serve you with beautifully fried fish because, traditionally, these people all use olive oil for their frying."

GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

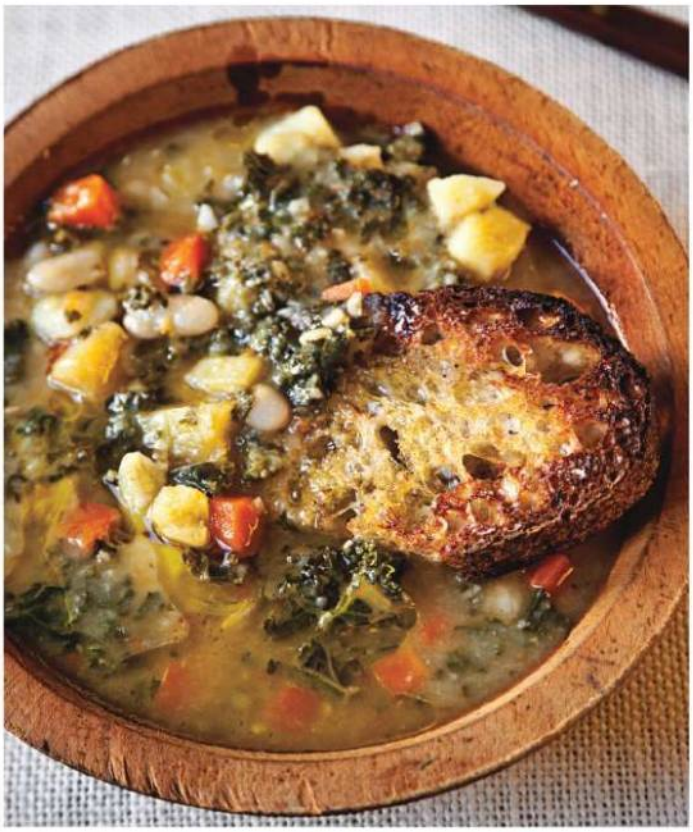
Spain leads the world's olive oil production, with about 200 million gallons a year. The runners-up: Italy, Greece, and Tunisia.

SOURCE: UC-DAVIS OLIVE CENTER

In Mediterranean lands, fish is roasted in olive oil, chicken is braised in it, and meats are rubbed with it before grilling. In Tuscany, they even pour it liberally over seared T-bone steaks. Vegetables, both raw and cooked, are all better with fine olive oil, and all my favorite breads—*focacce* in southern Italy, grilled flatbreads in Turkey and Syria, sesame breads in Tunisia—are richly dressed with it. And seemingly every home cook throughout the Mediterranean bakes some version of an olive oil cake or olive oil cookies, sometimes livened up with orange juice or lemon juice—a God-ordained combination, if you ask me.

BACK IN THE 1990S, WHEN HIGH-QUALITY extra-virgin olive oil began to appear on the shelves of specialty food shops in the United States, the selection was almost entirely from Italy, a fact attributable to savvy Tuscan producers who were quick to appreciate the potential of the U.S. market. Nowadays, Spain and Greece are prime producers and exporters too. I also find wonderful oils from New Zealand, Chile, South Africa, and, increasingly, California. *(continued on page 64)*

Right, from top, Tuscan bean soup (see page 70 for a recipe); stewed okra (see page 70 for a recipe). Facing page, olive oil producers preparing to press oil in Bejaïa, Algeria.



FROM TOP: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; TODD COLEMAN

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A COOK'S GUIDE TO OLIVE OILS

Fine extra-virgin olive oils exhibit a seemingly infinite range of aromas, flavors, textures, and hues. Here is a highly selective list of oils from around the world—drawn from a tasting of more than a hundred bottles—that we think represents this range beautifully. —*The Editors*

The French region of Provence is known for its delicate olive oils, such as the sweet, golden oil from **Moulin Jean Marie Cornille ($28)** 1. Greek oils tend to lie at the more muscular end of the flavor spectrum. We love the deep green, unfiltered **Astrikas Estate Biolea ($25)** 2, made from *koroneiki* olives on the Greek island of Crete, for its lingering finish of wild bitter greens and tomato vines. Italian oils run the gamut from subtly fruity (like those from northern Italy) to ripe and assertive (like many from Sicily). Falling firmly in the latter category is **Fontanasalsa ($31)** 3, a Sicilian oil made with *cerasuolo* olives; it smacks of artichokes and grass and is ideally suited to drizzling over roasted vegetables or meats. Tuscan oils are known for their peppery astringency; one of our favorites is **Oleificio Chianti Buonsapore ($28)** 4, which has a weighty, almost buttery texture and vegetal aroma; we weren't surprised to learn that it's the house cooking oil at Chez Panisse in Berkeley. Tuscan olive varieties form the foundation of the oil from **McEvoy Ranch ($22)** 5, a pioneer in California's olive oil industry; with hints of almonds and rosemary, this is the oil we favor for drizzling over tomato bruschetta. California producers are bottling single-varietal oils, too: we love the bright, aromatic *arbequina* oil from Olive Press ($26), which was the first olive mill in northern California. *Arbequina* tastes more demure and perfumed in **L'Estornell ($38)** 6, a pretty oil from Catalonia, Spain. We were familiar with the well-balanced, fruity oils from that country's Andalusia region, but we'd never tasted anything like Masia El Altet ($39) from the eastern region of Valencia, which offers hints of bananas and tropical fruit. We were also intrigued by bottles from the Middle East, especially Israel, and North Africa; **Les Terroirs de Marrakech ($26)** 7, a Moroccan oil made with the *picholine* variety, tastes like cured black olives and is terrific drizzled over cooked (or even raw) fish. Australia and New Zealand are making interesting olive oils, too; **Moutere Grove ($35)** 8, produced on New Zealand's South Island, is a hefty, deep green wonder. And there's a growing number of outstanding oils from South America, like Chile's **Giangrandi Intense Blend ($17)** 9; if there's ever been a perfect oil for finishing a juicy grilled steak, this is it. (See THE PANTRY, page 108, for sources.)

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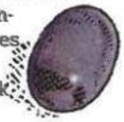
A GLOSSARY OF OLIVES

All olives are green when young and darken as they mature, and each variety has its own optimal stage of harvesting for oil. There are hundreds of varieties of olives grown around the world; here are ten that are prized for their oil. *—N. H. J.*

Frantoio

This medium-size, oval olive is the main variety in a typical Tuscan blended oil. *Frantoio* oil is peppery with hints of freshly cut grass, and balanced by notes of bitterness and pungency; it's great for both drizzling and cooking.

Leccino



A Tuscan original, this ellipsoid olive is now widespread throughout Italy. Notable for its ability to withstand cold temperatures, and for its quick ripening, it makes mildly pungent, fruity, sweet oils.

Moraiolo

These small, plump olives form the basis of most oils from Italy's Umbria region. Ample fruit flavors are balanced by an exceptionally high level of polyphenols, the compounds in olive oil that yield pleasing pungency and bitterness. *Moraiolo* oils are excellent drizzled over bean soups and bruschetta.

Taggiasca

These tapered orbs grow all over Liguria, on the northwest coast of Italy. They produce a fruity, nuanced oil and are harvested late, which means they're low in polyphenols (and thus largely free of bitterness). Oils made from this variety are best used as a garnish, particularly with delicate seafood dishes or salads.

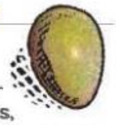
Arbequina

This tiny round fruit hails from Catalonia, Spain, and is now widely planted in the country's Andalusia region as well. It's a favorite of California growers, too. Fresh, fruity, and often possessed of a distinct almond flavor, the oil of the *arbequina* is low in polyphenols, a fact that causes its flavors to diminish with time. Use this olive's oil to dress salads and to drizzle into soups and sauces.

Picual

This distinctively shaped, medium-size Spanish variety accounts for much of the world's olive oil and for nearly all of the oil made in Andalusia, Spain's top-producing region. The *picual* is exceptionally high in polyphenols, and its oil has a peppery astringency and a ripe (some say overripe) flavor. A great all-purpose oil, it stands up to cooking and even frying.

Koroneiki

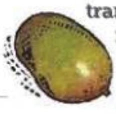


One of Greece's most common olives, the small *koroneiki* produces big, fruity oils with hints of green apple and herbs. They're especially good in cooked vegetable dishes and long-simmered stews.

Chemlali

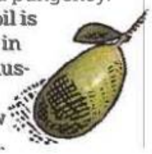
These small, chubby olives are commonly used in Tunisian and Moroccan oils. Because they're harvested late, the olives produce oil that's sweet and soft, with a faint almond flavor.

Picholine



These elongated fruits—popular table olives in France—translate into mild oils that are balanced but without the characteristic bitterness and pungency imparted by high levels of polyphenols. Their oil is best used for fresh salads or to dress cooked vegetables.

Barnea



This hardy olive was developed by Israeli agronomists and produces a smooth oil with very little bitterness and pungency. *Barnea* oil is popular in Israel, Australia, and New Zealand.

(continued from page 61) For the longest time, California, though it has a climate perfect for growing olives, was absent from the list of well-regarded oil-producing regions of the world. The state's history with olives is long but not particularly distinguished. Spanish missionaries brought olives to the West Coast (by way of South America) in the late 18th century; indeed, the state's original olive variety (which used to be harvested mostly for lamp oil, sacramental purposes, and also for table olives) is called Mission. But a glut of low-priced European oils and a long-standing preference among American cooks for vegetable oil held California back. Even as late as the mid-1990s, Mort Rosenblum, an olive expert and the author of the book *Olives: The Life and Lore of a Noble Fruit* (North Point Press, 1996), said of California oils, "[They're] good, but essentially they're imitations of Italian oils. And right now you can get better ones from Europe."

That's starting to change. Though only 1 percent of the olive oil sold in the United States comes from California, the volume produced in the state is growing. This year, California will produce about 800,000 gallons—25 percent more than the year before. My talks with some of the people behind California's blossoming olive oil industry have been enlightening, even inspiring. The product is being embraced there with a distinctly American fervor—a blend of science and epicurean zeal that says a lot about what it takes to make very good olive oil on a commercial scale.

GOOD FOR YOU

Studies show that people who consume two tablespoons of olive oil daily lower their risk of heart disease.

SOURCE: THE UNITED STATES FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

Much of the excitement about California olive oil can be traced to the Olive Center, a research facility at the University of California at Davis, established two years ago as part of the Robert Mondavi Institute for Wine and Food Science. The Olive Center is the only olive research and educational institution in North America, and it's been teaching growers a new farming technique, introduced from Spain, called "super-high-density planting": trees are planted in tight rows, with 650 plantings in a single acre—roughly 550 more than you'll find in a traditional olive grove in Tuscany. The aim of super-high-density planting is to allow farmers to harvest the olives more quickly—the freshness of the olive at the time of pressing is paramount in the making of a good olive oil—and thus be able to produce quality oils at modest cost.

That happy combination of high quality and low cost is a sort of holy grail for serious producers of extra-virgin olive oil who must sell their product in a global market that's increasingly crowded with cheap oils labeled "extra-virgin." As Dan Flynn, the executive director of the Olive Center, puts it, "The grade of extra-virgin is broad and undifferentiated." Even when carefully regulated, as it is in much of the olive oil world, the term *extra-virgin* can denote a host of flavors, from bland and uninteresting to complex and deliciously expressive of the fruit.

What, then, actually determines the quality of an extra-virgin olive oil? The care with which olives are grown, harvested, and pressed is one part of the equation. How carefully the oil is stored is another. The variety of olives used and their stage of maturity when picked is yet another. But the single most critical factor in producing high-quality olive oil is time. Nothing would delight producers more than having an olive mill sitting in the middle of the groves so that they could pick

Facing page, fried squid, fish, and shrimp (see page 69 for a recipe).

ILLUSTRATIONS: BRENDA WEAVER

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A FLAVORFUL FOUNDATION

Olive oil is the key ingredient in all kinds of Mediterranean sauces and condiments, from chunky relishes made with chopped nuts, herbs, and aromatic vegetables to creamy, egg-enriched aïolis. All of the following classic preparations can be made with relatively inexpensive all-purpose extra-virgin olive oils. See page 72 for recipes. —*Hunter Lewis*

1 Herb and Chile Oil
For centuries, French and Italian cooks have infused oil with herbs and chiles by gently heating them together. Use infused oils to baste roasted meats, make vinaigrettes, and drizzle over grilled fish.

2 Potato Skordalia
This garlicky purée of olive oil, almonds, and potatoes hails from Greece, where it's paired with roasted lamb or slathered on toasted country bread.

3 Pistachio Sauce
This chunky Moroccan relish of coarsely chopped pistachios and herbs pairs wonderfully with roasted quail or other game birds and with whole grilled fish.

4 Lemon Confit
The oil in this simple preparation is used both to cook and to preserve sliced lemons. Smash or chop the preserved lemons to brighten up other relishes and dressings, or serve them as a tart condiment on their own.

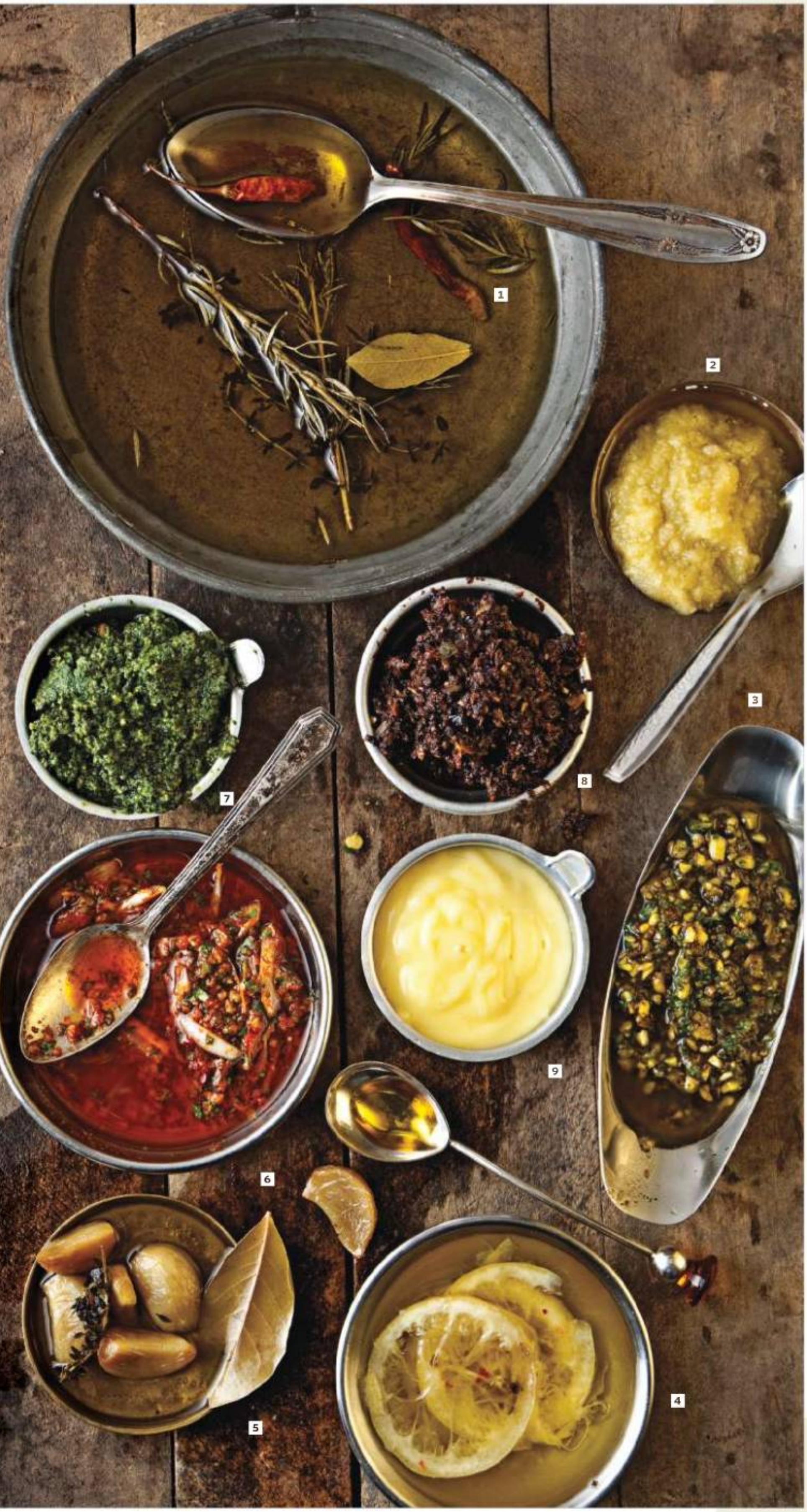
5 Garlic Confit
These mellow, oil-poached cloves can be puréed and added to mashed potatoes or to other sauces, and the garlic-infused oil works well in vinaigrettes and as a basting sauce.

6 Charmoula
Pictured here in its rustic style, this aromatic, paprika-spiced sauce can also be puréed into a paste. North African cooks use it to marinate fish, finish *tagines*, or dress cooked vegetables.

7 Pesto
Tossed in pasta, spread over crostini, or stirred into soup, this versatile sauce, with origins in both France and Italy, takes its fresh flavor from basil and its earthy bite from olive oil and garlic.

8 Tapenade
Use mild-flavored olives to make this briny, rough-textured olive-and-anchovy sauce, favored by cooks in France. Smear it on roasted potatoes, use it as a dip for vegetables, or stir in more oil to make a thinner sauce for drizzling over fish.

9 Aïoli
A pale-golden oil works best to make this silky, garlic-spiked mayonnaise. Serve it with fried seafood or as a dipping sauce for vegetables, bread, or hard-boiled eggs.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI; TODD COLEMAN; ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

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the olives and press them instantly.

I'M REMINDED OF THAT FACT EVERY time we harvest our own olives in Tuscany. Up in these mountains east of Cortona, we grow mostly *leccino*, a variety that ripens early and is resistant to extreme midwinter chill. In early November, *leccino* olives are already black and shiny and ready to be picked; they droop on branches like plump jet beads on a Victorian necklace. The weather last fall at harvesttime was balmy but unsettled, and the very first morning, we were rained out. For lunch, we sat down to grilled sausages and *zuppa frantoiana*, a soup of beans and farro that you're supposed to garnish with fresh new oil. The soup was rich and filling, but we had to make do with oil from the 2008 harvest.

The next day, the weather cleared, and we got down to it. Like most small growers, we pick by hand, and it's an agonizingly slow process. In some places olives are picked mechanically, using vibrating combs that shake the tree to knock the olives off. Even if I could afford such a machine, I wouldn't buy one—it damages the olives, and damaged olives don't produce good oil. So my family, friends, and I picked, one by one, dropping the fruit into wicker baskets tied around our waists. Each day ended around five o'clock, as darkness fell and we tipped our final basket-loads into the plastic bins in which the fruit would be carried to the mill.

THE ANCIENT OLIVE

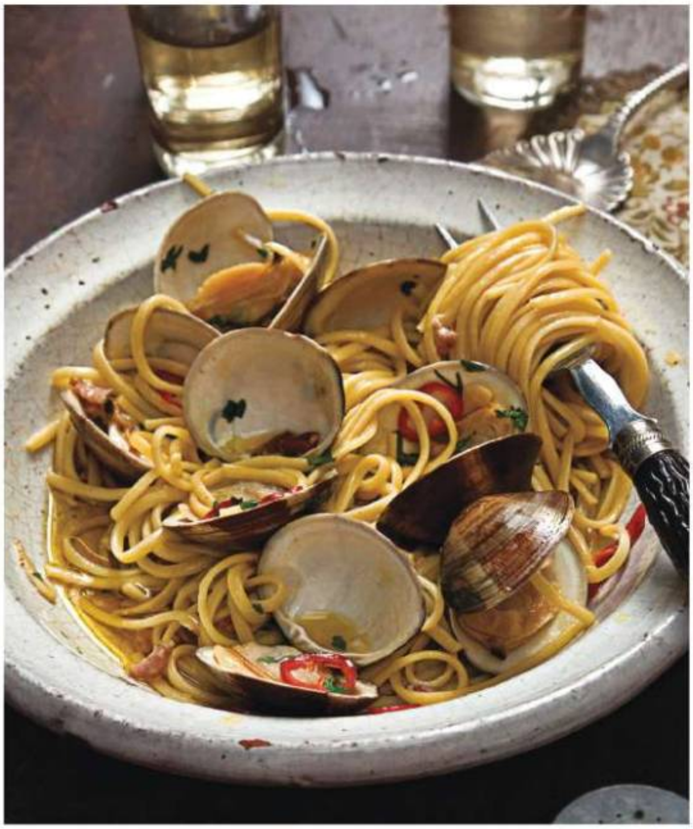
The average olive tree lives up to 500 years; Crete is home to the world's oldest, which, after 5,000 years, is still producing fruit.

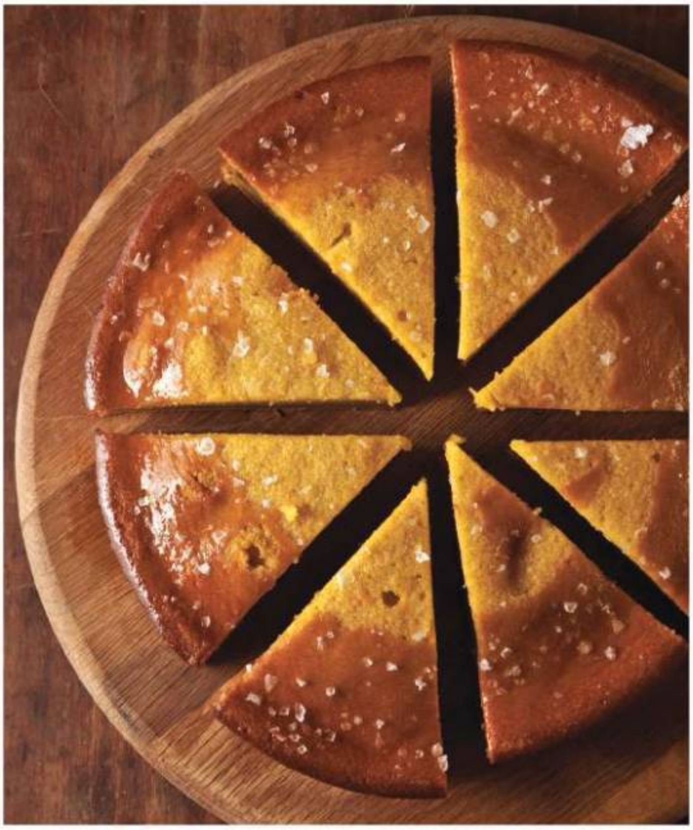
SOURCE: INSTITUTE FOR OLIVE TREES AND SUBTROPICAL PLANTS OF CHANIA

The mill we use is a 30-minute drive from our house. There, you can choose to process your crop in one of two ways. The first is the slow, old-fashioned, crush-and-press method; the second is a more modern process that employs state-of-the-art stainless-steel machinery. You dump fresh, clean olives into a chamber at one end, press a button, and, within minutes, fill your cans with lush, green oil at the other end. My traditionalist son and daughter prefer the old-fashioned way, but I like the modern method for its rapid expression of scrupulously clean oil.

In all, it took us four days to harvest the olives we brought to the mill. Ideally, the experts say, to make good olive oil you must press within 24 to 48 hours of harvest. This, as we have learned, is often impossible. You need at least 200 kilos (or 440 pounds) of olives to make a single pressing, and that takes a lot of hands. And rain (which can cause just-harvested olives to ferment and spoil) can wreak havoc on your plans. So you wait. Then you pick. Then you pray.

And in the end it's worth it. Last year we brought home 60 beautiful liters of unfiltered oil, golden green with flashes of deeper color, so highly perfumed that I felt like rubbing it on my arms, dabbing it behind my ears, and drinking it. I got my first real taste of the new oil by lavishly slopping some of it over a slice of bread that had been toasted over an open fire and rubbed with a cut clove of garlic. Last year's *resa*, or yield, was not high, but the quality was extraordinary. We store the oil in 30-liter stainless-steel tins in our cool, dark cellar, and every time we extract a liter or so for the kitchen, the fragrance—apples? tomato leaves? almonds? or maybe just the pure fragrance of good, sound olives?—floods the air.





Right, from top, linguine with clams and chiles (see page 69 for a recipe); orange-scented olive oil cake (see page 70 for a recipe).

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Artichoke hearts stewed in olive oil (see page 70 for a recipe).

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LINGUINE WITH CLAMS AND CHILES

SERVES 4

As olive oil mingles with white wine and the sweet juices of clams in this classic pasta dish (pictured on page 67), it creates a fragrant sauce that coats the pasta. Be sure to undercook the pasta slightly so it can absorb and finish cooking in the sauce.

- **Kosher salt, to taste**
- 1 **lb. pasta, preferably linguine**
- 1⁄3 **cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling**
- 4 **oz. pancetta, minced**
- 2 **cloves garlic, thinly sliced crosswise**
- 2 **Fresno or Holland chiles, stemmed and thinly sliced crosswise**
- 2 3⁄4 **lbs. littleneck clams (about 30), scrubbed clean**
- 1⁄3 **cup dry white wine**
- 3 **tbsp. roughly chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**

1 Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook, stirring occasionally, until just al dente, about 6 minutes. Drain pasta, reserving 1⁄2 cup pasta water, and set aside. Meanwhile, heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium heat. Add pancetta and cook, stirring occasionally, until just crisp, about 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer pancetta to a paper towel; set aside.

2 Return skillet to medium heat and add garlic and half the chiles; cook, stirring often, until garlic is golden brown, about 3 minutes. Add clams and wine, increase heat to high, and cook, covered, swirling pan occasionally, until clams open and release their juices, 5-10 minutes. Using tongs, transfer clams to a plate; set aside. Bring sauce to a boil over high heat, return pancetta to pan, and add reserved pasta and 1⁄4 cup cooking liquid. Cook, tossing pasta occasionally, until sauce clings to pasta, about 2 minutes. Sprinkle in some more of the pasta cooking water if the pasta seems dry. Add 2 tbsp. parsley, season with salt, and toss to combine. Transfer pasta to a serving bowl, arrange clams over pasta, and pour any clam juices from the plate over pasta. Drizzle pasta with more olive oil and garnish with remaining chiles and parsley.

Pairing Note Crisp Bisson Vermentino 2006 ($30) pairs beautifully with this dish's briny, spicy notes.

BISTECCA CON SALSA DELLE ERBE

(Steak with Herb Sauce)

SERVES 2

A thick, well-marbled cut—a rib eye, strip, or porterhouse—works best for this olive oil- and herb-topped steak (pictured on page 56). This dish is based on one served by the Italian-born chef Cesare Casella at Salumeria Rosi in New York City.

- 1 **cup packed basil leaves**
- 1 **cup packed flat-leaf parsley leaves**
- 2 **tbsp. packed fresh oregano leaves**
- 1 **tbsp. packed fresh rosemary leaves**
- 1 **tbsp. packed fresh thyme leaves**
- 1 **tbsp. packed fresh tarragon leaves**
- 2 **cloves garlic, minced**
- 3⁄4 **cup plus 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- 1 **24 oz. 2"-3"-thick rib-eye, strip, or porterhouse steak**

1 Put the herbs and garlic on a cutting board and finely chop together with a large knife. Transfer herb mixture to a small bowl and stir in 3⁄4 cup oil. Season herb sauce with salt and pepper, cover with plastic wrap, and set aside for at least 1 hour to let the flavors meld. Meanwhile, put steak on a plate; season generously with salt and pepper and rub with the remaining oil.

2 Build a medium-hot fire in a charcoal grill or heat a gas grill to medium-high. (Alternatively, heat an oiled grill pan over medium-high heat.) Cook steak, flipping once, until browned and cooked to desired doneness, 8-10 minutes for medium rare. Transfer steak to a platter and let rest for 5 minutes. Slice steak against the grain and spoon some reserved sauce over top.

Pairing Note This rich steak calls out for a smoky red, such as Wild Oak Syrah 2006 ($35) from Sonoma, California.

FRITTO MISTO

(Fried Squid, Fish, and Shrimp)

SERVES 4

David Pasternack, the chef at the New York City restaurant Esca, uses a combination of olive oil and canola oil to make this classic Italian dish (pictured on page 65). For more on frying with olive oil, see page 106.

- 5 **cups plus 1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 **cup canola oil**
- 1 **cup Wondra flour (see page 108)**
- 1⁄4 **cup cornstarch**
- 2 **tbsp. semolina**
- 1⁄8 **tsp. cayenne pepper**
- 1⁄8 **tsp. sugar**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- 1⁄2 **lb. large tail-on shrimp, peeled**
- 1⁄2 **lb. small fish, such as smelt or sardines, cleaned, butterflied, and deboned**
- 1⁄2 **lb. squid, cut into 1⁄2" rings**
- 3 **cups salad greens, such as arugula**
- **Lemon wedges, for serving**
- **Aïoli, for serving (optional; see page 72 for a recipe)**

Pour 5 cups olive oil and the canola oil into a 4-qt. saucepan and heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 330°. Meanwhile, combine the flour, cornstarch, semolina, cayenne, sugar, and salt and pepper in a medium bowl. Working in 4 batches, add a fourth of the shrimp, fish, and squid. Toss to coat. Shake off excess flour, transfer seafood to oil, and fry, stirring, until crunchy, 2-3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer seafood to a rack set over a baking sheet and season with salt. Allow oil to return to 330°; repeat in batches with remaining seafood. To serve, put greens into a bowl, drizzle with remaining olive oil, and squeeze a lemon wedge over greens. Toss to combine. Transfer greens to a platter and arrange fried seafood on top. Serve with aïoli (see page 72 for a recipe), if you like.

Pairing Note A dry prosecco, like Adami Garbèl NV ($29), is a natural partner for fried seafood.

BUYING AND STORING EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

Extra-virgin olive oil is the preferred choice of most Mediterranean cooks. As a rule, high-quality, high-priced, estate-bottled extra-virgin olive oil shouldn't be used for cooking, since its nuanced flavor can be destroyed by heat; use these high-end oils for garnishing foods, dressing salads, and the like. There are plenty of lower-priced, good-quality extra-virgin olive oils that are fine for sautéing, frying, roasting, and other cooked preparations. Whatever kind you're using, keep in mind a few rules of thumb for buying and storing the oil. When shopping, look for a date stamp: the fresher the oil, the better. Many conscientious growers now put the harvest date on the label, or at least a "use by" date, which should be two years after harvesting. The archenemies of olive oils are light and heat: don't buy olive oil that comes in a clear glass bottle or has been sitting in a sunny shop, and don't keep it next to the stove. Refrigeration can help prolong the life of an oil; you can store a large quantity in the fridge (or just a cool, dark place) and keep a small amount at room temperature for everyday use. Lou DiPalo, the owner of DiPalo Fine Foods, an Italian specialty store in New York City, says that a bottle of extra-virgin olive oil should be consumed within three months of opening; beyond that, oxidation and rancidity can occur. Also, buy from a reliable source, whether it's a local shop or a mail-order purveyor like DiPalo's, Zingerman's, Corti Brothers, or Formaggio Kitchen. The best importers and retailers track shipments to make sure the oil is handled with care. —*N. H. J. and Riddhi Shah*

FACING PAGE: TODD COLEMAN

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TUSCAN BEAN SOUP

SERVES 4–6

Author Nancy Harmon Jenkins uses olive oil three ways in this version of the venerable Italian soup (pictured on page 61): for sautéing garlic, rubbing on the toasts that accompany the dish, and finishing the soup.

- 2 cups dried cannellini beans, soaked overnight
- 2 medium carrots, roughly chopped
- 1 rib celery, roughly chopped
- ½ yellow onion, roughly chopped
- ¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic (3 minced, 1 halved)
- 10 oz. squash, such as butternut, peeled and cut into ½" cubes (about 2 cups)
- 4 large kale leaves, preferably lacinato or cavalo nero, stemmed and chopped
- 1 medium waxy-style potato, peeled and cut into ½" cubes
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ½ tsp. crushed fennel seeds
- 8 thick slices country-style bread

❶ Drain beans and transfer to a 3-qt. saucepan along with half the carrots, the celery, the onions, and 5 cups water. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to low; simmer, covered, until beans are tender, 40–45 minutes. Set ¾ cup beans aside; transfer the remaining beans and their cooking liquid to a blender and purée. Set puréed beans aside.

❷ Heat 2 tbsp. oil in a 5-qt. pot over medium heat. Add minced garlic and cook, stirring often, until soft, about 3 minutes. Add reserved bean purée, along with the remaining carrots, the squash, kale, potato, and 1 cup water. Season with salt and pepper, bring to a boil, and reduce heat to medium-low; cook, covered, until the vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes. Stir in the crushed fennel seeds and reserved whole beans. Meanwhile, toast the bread and rub it with the cut end of the halved garlic clove. Drizzle each toast with 1 tbsp. oil. To serve, place 1 to 2 pieces toasted bread in the bottom of soup bowls and ladle soup over the top. Drizzle soup with remaining oil.

STEWED OKRA

SERVES 4

In this Greek side dish (pictured on page 61), okra is salted and then tossed in a lemon juice–water mixture that prevents the vegetable from taking on a gummy texture as it simmers in a rich olive oil and tomato sauce.

- 1 lb. okra
- 2 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 onion, grated
- 1 28-oz. can whole peeled tomatoes, puréed with their liquid
- 5 tbsp. minced flat-leaf parsley
- ½ tsp. sugar
- 3 thin lemon slices, rind removed
- 1 medium tomato, thinly sliced
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

❶ Trim stems from okra without puncturing pods; rub cut ends with 2 tsp. salt and transfer okra to a strainer. Let sit for 30 minutes. Put 3 cups water and 1 tbsp. lemon juice into a bowl, add okra, and stir; drain and set aside.

❷ Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium heat. Add onions; cook, until soft and golden, about 6 minutes. Add puréed tomatoes, parsley, sugar, and lemon slices. Cook, covered, for 10 minutes. Add reserved okra; stir gently. Top okra with tomato slices and cook, covered, stirring, until tender, 15–20 minutes. Season okra with salt and pepper.

ARTICHAUTS À LA BARIGOULE

(Artichoke Hearts Stewed in Olive Oil)

SERVES 4

Olive oil and lemon juice complement tender artichokes in this Provençal dish (pictured on page 68). The recipe comes from The Vanderbilt, a restaurant in Brooklyn, New York.

- ½ lemon, zested and juiced, plus 4 thin slices lemon
- 4 medium artichokes
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 10 white button mushrooms
- 6 cloves garlic, smashed
- 2 small carrots, cut into 3" pieces
- ½ cup white wine
- 1 tbsp. unsalted butter
- ¼ tsp. cracked coriander seeds
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 6 olives, preferably Kalamata, pitted and halved
- ¼ cup flat-leaf parsley leaves
- ⅛ tsp. paprika or piment d'Espelette

❶ Combine lemon juice and 6 cups water in a large bowl. Working with one artichoke at a time, place artichoke on its side. Using a serrated knife, cut off leaves by making a crosswise cut about 1½" from where the stem meets the base; discard leaves. Cut away tough outer leaves remaining on artichoke's base until you reach inner yellow leaves. Using a peeler, remove green outer layer from stem and base. Trim off bottom ½" of stem. Use a spoon to scoop out fuzzy choke from center of artichoke. Halve trimmed artichoke; transfer to lemon water. Repeat with remaining artichokes.

❷ Drain artichokes. Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add artichokes cut side down, along with mushrooms, garlic, and carrots. Cook, stirring, until vegetables begin to brown, 8–10 minutes. Add lemon slices, wine, butter, and coriander; boil. Reduce wine by half, 3–4 minutes. Add enough water to just cover vegetables; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer until vegetables are tender, 12–15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Using tongs, transfer artichokes, carrots, and mushrooms to a bowl. Bring liquid to a boil; reduce to ⅓ cup, 8–10 minutes. Strain liquid; return to skillet along with artichokes, mushrooms, carrots, and olives; heat through. Garnish with lemon zest, parsley, and paprika.

ORANGE-SCENTED OLIVE OIL CAKE

SERVES 10–12

A heady mixture of olive oil and preserved oranges flavors this moist, dense Sicilian dessert (pictured on page 67). The recipe is based on one in *The Perfect Finish* by Bill Yosses and Melissa Clark (W. W. Norton, 2010).

- 2 oranges
- 2⅓ cups sugar
- Unsalted butter, for greasing
- 2½ cups flour, plus more for pan
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 4 eggs
- 6 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup fresh orange juice
- ¼ cup confectioners' sugar
- Sea salt, for garnish

❶ Trim about ½" from the tops and bottoms of oranges; quarter oranges lengthwise. Bring 6 cups water to a boil in a 4-qt. saucepan; add oranges. Bring water back to a boil; drain. Repeat boiling process twice more with fresh water. Put oranges, 1 cup sugar, and 4 cups water into a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring often, until sugar dissolves and orange rind can be easily pierced with a fork, about 30 minutes. Remove pan from heat and let cool to room temperature.

❷ Heat oven to 350°. Grease a 10" round cake pan with butter and dust with flour; line pan bottom with parchment paper cut to fit. Set pan aside. Whisk together flour, baking powder, and baking soda in a medium bowl and set aside. Remove orange quarters from syrup, remove and discard any seeds, and put oranges into the bowl of a food processor. Pulse until oranges form a chunky purée, 10–12 pulses. Add remaining sugar, reserved flour mixture, vanilla, and eggs and process until incorporated, about 2 minutes. Add olive oil; process until combined. Pour batter into prepared pan; bake until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, 40–45 min-

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utes. Let cool for 30 minutes.

3 In a small bowl, whisk orange juice and confectioners' sugar to make a thin glaze. Remove cake from pan and transfer to a cake stand or plate. Using a pastry brush, brush orange glaze over top and sides of cake; let cool completely. Garnish cake with salt.

Sauces

The following nine sauces and condiments are described and pictured on page 66. All can be made with all-purpose extra-virgin olive oil, and all of them, with the exception of the aïoli, should be allowed to come to room temperature before being served.

HERB AND CHILE OIL

MAKES 1 CUP

- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, halved
- 2 dried chiles de árbol
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf

Combine the ingredients in a 1-qt. saucepan; heat over medium heat until an instant-read thermometer reads 200°. Remove from heat; let cool. Oil will keep, refrigerated and covered, for up to 2 weeks.

POTATO SKORDALIA

MAKES 2 CUPS

- 1 medium russet potato, peeled and cut into 1" cubes
- Kosher salt, to taste
- ⅓ cup ground blanched almonds
- 8 cloves garlic, smashed and minced into a paste
- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp. red wine vinegar

Put potatoes into a 2-qt. saucepan and add enough salted water to cover by 1". Bring to a boil and cook until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain; transfer to a bowl. Mash potatoes until smooth; stir in almonds and garlic. Add oil, then vinegar, in a thin stream while whisking vigorously; season with salt. Skordalia will keep, refrigerated and covered, for up to 4 days.

TAPENADE

MAKES 1 CUP

- ¾ cup pitted dry-cured black olives
- ¼ cup salt-packed capers, soaked and drained
- 3 tbsp. sliced almonds
- 5 oil-packed anchovy filets, drained
- 2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 8 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp. fresh orange or lemon juice

Combine the olives, capers, almonds, anchovies, garlic, and 2 tbsp. oil in the bowl of a food processor and pulse until the ingredients are finely chopped. Transfer olive mixture to a small bowl and add the remaining oil and orange juice in a thin stream while whisking vigorously. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight to let the flavors meld. The tapenade will keep, refrigerated and covered, for up to 4 days.

AÏOLI

MAKES 1 CUP

- 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 egg yolk, at room temperature
- 1 clove garlic, minced and smashed into a paste
- 1 cup pale golden extra-virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt to taste

Drape a tea towel over a 5-qt. pot and set a medium bowl inside pot so it nestles inside snugly. Add lemon juice, egg yolk, and garlic to bowl and beat until well combined. Transfer oil to a measuring cup with a spout; while whisking vigorously, drizzle a few drops of oil into bowl with egg mixture. Still whisking, drizzle in a few more drops, and continue to whisk vigorously until egg mixture is very thick and emulsified. Gradually add remaining oil in a very thin stream while whisking vigorously until the aïoli is smooth, pale yellow, and emulsified. Season with salt. Whisk in 2 tsp. water for a thinner aïoli. Aïoli will keep, refrigerated and covered, for up to 3 days.

PISTACHIO SAUCE

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

- 1 cup shelled unsalted pistachios, toasted and coarsely ground
- 3 tbsp. roughly chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1 tbsp. roughly chopped fresh mint
- 1 clove garlic, smashed and minced into a paste
- 1 red Fresno or Holland chile, stemmed, seeded, and minced
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- ¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Combine pistachios, parsley, mint, garlic, chiles, and lemon zest and juice in a medium bowl. Add oil in a thin stream, whisking constantly with a fork until the sauce is well combined; season with salt and pepper. Cover sauce and let sit at room temperature for 1 hour before serving. Sauce will keep, refrigerated and covered, for up to 3 days.

LEMON CONFIT

MAKES 2½ CUPS

- 2 lemons
- 1½ cups extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. cracked coriander seeds
- 1 tsp. cracked fennel seeds
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 2 bay leaves

Halve lemons crosswise and squeeze their juice into a bowl; set juice aside. Thinly slice juiced lemons crosswise and transfer lemons, reserved juice, and remaining ingredients to a 1-qt. saucepan over high heat. Bring mixture to a simmer, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes. Remove pan from heat; let cool. Transfer lemon confit to a glass jar, cover, and refrigerate. Confit will keep, refrigerated, for 3 weeks.

GARLIC CONFIT

MAKES 2 CUPS

- 1½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt
- 65 cloves garlic (about 1½ cups)
- 10 whole black peppercorns
- 5 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf

Heat oven to 300°. Put ingredients into a 1-qt. pot, making sure garlic is submerged in oil. Cover pot; bake until garlic is golden brown and tender, about 1 hour. Let cool. Transfer mixture to a glass jar; cover surface of oil with plastic wrap. Cover jar and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks.

CHARMOULA

MAKES 1¼ CUPS

- ¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 1 tsp. ground coriander
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. sweet or smoked paprika
- 10 sprigs fresh cilantro, minced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 red Fresno or Holland chile, stemmed, seeded, and minced
- 1 shallot, halved and thinly sliced
- Kosher salt, to taste

Combine first 10 ingredients in a medium bowl and season with salt. (For a smoother consistency, purée in a food processor.) Cover and let sit at least 1 hour at room temperature to let flavors meld. Sauce will keep, covered and refrigerated, for up to 4 days.

PESTO

MAKES 1 CUP

- 6½ cups packed basil leaves
- ¾ cup grated Parmesan
- 6 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tbsp. lightly toasted pine nuts
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Put basil, Parmesan, 3 tbsp. oil, pine nuts, and garlic into the bowl of a food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Season with salt and pepper and process, drizzling in remaining oil, to make a smooth paste. Transfer pesto to a bowl and serve. Or cover surface with plastic wrap immediately and refrigerate for up to 2 days.

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In the Old Town of Mombasa, Kenya, the call to prayer comes before dawn. Soon after, the dusty lanes of this port city awaken with delivery carts and fishmongers; along the waterfront, white-robed men in patterned caps gossip over endless cups of spiced coffee and *mandazi*, cardamom-scented fritters. Women in brightly colored headscarves sell fried-lentil *bhajia* and roasted cassava sprinkled with chile powder to uniformed schoolchildren. At makeshift sidewalk restaurants, chunks of barracuda sizzle atop oiled griddles. Later, as the noonday heat grows unbearable, the people of Mombasa retreat into shade.

I find shelter behind twin blue doors in an alleyway, at the home of Lela Abdulaziz, whose family owns several fruit and vegetable stalls in the city's main market. I struck up a conversation with her earlier this morning, while buying black Zanzibar peppercorns from her father. On hearing that I'd come to Mombasa to learn about the foods eaten here, she invited me for lunch—my first taste of home cooking in this part of East Africa, a region knit together by a complex skein of linguistic and religious kinship that constitutes Swahili culture. In her foyer, Lela sheds her *bui-bui*, the black robe and head covering worn by many Swahili women, and begins preparing the meal. First, she unfolds a low wooden stool that has a serrated blade affixed to one end. She sits, a half coconut gripped in her hennaed hands, and grates the white meat against the blade into a fired-clay bowl. Then she stuffs handful after handful of shredded coconut into a woven-palm-frond strainer called a *kifumbu*. I watch as she pours in a cup of water and squeezes the *kifumbu* to extract the coconut's rich, thick milk, which she stirs into a chicken stew, called *kuku wa nazi*, that has been simmering in a pot on a charcoal brazier.

I hear the slap of rubber slippers on the path outside; Lela's brother Ahmed Athman has returned from the market. A short man with amber eyes, he casts off his shoes at the entrance and sets down bags of chiles, a jar of tamarind paste, a sack of basmati rice, and packets of turmeric and cloves—staples along the Kenyan coast since seafarers from the Arabian Peninsula and India first landed in Mombasa centuries ago. Ahmed unwraps a whole white snapper, which he cleans and then marinates with lime juice and chiles for a dish called *samaki wa kupaka*. A short while later, Lela places the fish over the fire and bastes it with a sauce made from garlic and tamarind.

When the fish is seared on both sides, we carry platters across the foyer to a breeze-cooled living room. Seated on the floor next to me, Lela deftly scoops up some of the stew with a ball of the clove-infused basmati rice. "Eating this way, you enjoy the taste of the food," she says softly. With my right hand, I pluck off a flaky piece of the snapper and pop it into my mouth. I relish the heat of the chiles and the lingering notes of coriander and ginger in the snapper's firm flesh. Later, when I dream of Africa, it will be of this fish flavored just so.

The next day, I leave Mombasa behind, flying north along the coast that Arab traders have always called *sahel*—the word from which *Swahili* is derived—and taking a ferry to the mangrove-fringed island of Lamu. There, I've been told, cooks hew faithfully to traditional Swahili cooking, with its Arabic-inflected dishes, so distinct from the austere food of pastoral inland Kenya. Stepping onto the Lamu Town pier, which is piled with sacks of rice and cases of ginger-soda bottles, I make my way along the waterfront, lined with wooden sailing dhows, to meet Fateema Adnan, who was introduced by a friend in Nairobi and has offered to cook with me. She finds me sitting on a bench, easily spotting the unveiled foreigner in a crowd of women swathed in swirling chiffon. Tall and slim, Fateema leads me along sandy paths lined with coconut palms until we reach a coral-stone house in a fishing village nearby.

In the common room, Fateema introduces me to her mother-in-law, Rahamah, a lively woman clad in boldly printed *kanga* cloth, and to Rahamah's husband, Mohamed, a fisherman who is seated on the pounded-dirt floor weaving palm fronds into a round mat. Rahamah's grandchildren tumble in the doorway shouting "*jambo* [hello]!" It takes us much of the morning to grind rice into flour and roll it between our hands to make couscous, which we'll simmer in coconut milk.

When Rahamah and Fateema have finished cooking, they sit down on one of the room's two wooden settees and show me how to twist *kanga* cloth into graceful head wraps. Then Mohamed spreads clean palm mats on the floor, signaling that it's time to eat, and I realize that he has woven them especially for my visit. We wash our hands in bowls of cool water drawn from the village well.

I taste the couscous; the sticky, coconut-infused beads are sweet, and suited to sopping up the mackerel stew the women have cooked. Rahamah has also made *samaki wa kupaka*, and her grilled snapper is coated in an onion–tomato marinade that is less fiery than Lela Abdulaziz's version; it calls to mind a creamy *kurma* from India, an ocean away. The meal's centerpiece is *kuku wa rojo*, sautéed pieces of chicken smothered in curry gravy. Faintly redolent of the smoke from the coconut-husk cook fire, the meat is lean and gamey, a special treat for frugal Swahili fishermen, and the family's generosity is not lost on me.

After the meal, Rahamah gives me a spice basket she has fashioned from palm fronds and places her hand over her heart, repeating the word *rafiki*, Kiswahili for friend, several times. I am reluctant to leave. Then she dons her *bui-bui*, and only her brown eyes remain visible. I follow her outside, and we make our way on foot back to Lamu Town. Reaching the waterfront, we walk side by side a while longer, jostled by the crowd of early-evening shoppers. Momentarily distracted, I turn my head. Just as quickly, I look back again, to find that I have lost her in a sea of veils.

Shane Mitchell's most recent story for saveur *was "Wild and Refined" (April 2010).*

Facing page, clockwise from top left: Spiced beef flatbread (see page 86 for a recipe); a vendor with roasted corn; ginger crab (see page 84 for a recipe); a girl from the Lake Victoria region; squeezing coconut milk from a *kifumbu*; the pier in Lamu Town; Mombasa's Old Port; tomato-and-lime-braised fish (see page 86 for a recipe); a woman tending spinach in an inland village. Previous pages, a meal of curried chicken, rice-flour couscous, grilled fish, spinach, and coconut and maize buns in the home of the Adnan family, on Lamu Island.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TODD COLEMAN (1); JAMES FISHER (8)

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A Life on the Water Fishing is a principal source of livelihood all over coastal Kenya and also in the vicinity of Kenya's vast inland lakes. The men pictured here are net fishing at night for tilapia on Lake Victoria, an immense body of freshwater on Kenya's western border. In Mombasa and other major seaports, industrial fishing fleets—especially shrimp trawlers—bring significant quantities of seafood to market these days, but along some parts of the coast traditional wooden boats called dhows, fitted with distinctive-looking lateen sails, still unload their catch every morning: kingfish, tuna, snapper, and other local varieties. All over Mombasa's Old Town and in the main town on Lamu Island, cooks at sidewalk restaurants grill freshly landed fish—often dressed in a simple, bold-tasting marinade of tamarind and chiles—over charcoal.

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Flavors of Coastal Kenya The range of ingredients at the disposal of cooks in places like Mombasa and Lamu reflects the Arabic, South Asian, and indigenous East African cooking traditions that have long converged in those places, as well as the local maritime bounty. Clockwise from far left: Crabs, typically mangrove mud crabs, are harvested all along Kenya's coast and go into a variety of dishes. Ginger is a key ingredient in stews, *biriyanis* and other rice preparations, and ginger beer. Tomatoes are grown throughout Kenya and are used to add color and flavor to such dishes as *samaki wa kukausha* (tomato-and-lime-braised fish; see page 86 for a recipe). Chiles, introduced from South America centuries ago, have become as essential to the region's cookery as coconut and fish; African bird's-eye chiles (pictured) are among the most common. Onions can be found growing in village farm plots across Kenya and are often used in tandem with tomatoes in seafood dishes. Key limes add their tart flavor to chicken and fish stews. Garlic, originally an Asian import, has taken firm root in East Africa, playing a role in all kinds of dishes. The citrusy flavor of Kaffir lime leaves is prized by the region's cooks, especially in bright-tasting, quick-cooked seafood preparations. (For more on the staples of Swahili cooking, see page 84.)

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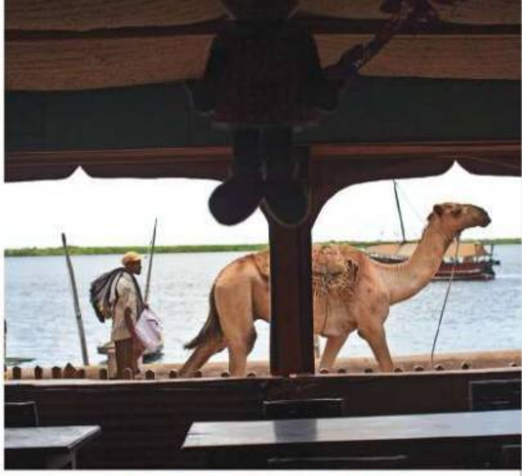

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Lela Abdulaziz's brother Hadi with *samaki wa kupaka*, or grilled whole snapper with tamarind (see page 84 for a recipe), outside their home in Mombasa. Facing page, clockwise from top left: launching a dugout canoe; *piri-piri* prawns (see page 86 for a recipe); camels on Lamu Town's waterfront; stewed kidney beans (see page 86 for a recipe); a vendor stall in Lamu Town; a street in Mombasa's Old Town; chicken stewed in coconut milk (see page 84 for a recipe); coconut–cornmeal buns wrapped in banana leaves; a woman in an inland village.

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MKAMBA WA TANGAWIZI

(Ginger Crab)

SERVES 2

Serve this dish (pictured on page 77) with large pieces of the cracked crab right in the broth. See page 108 for hard-to-find ingredients.

- **2 lbs. cooked whole Dungeness or king crab, or frozen and thawed snow crab legs and claws**
- **2 tbsp. canola oil**
- **4 green Thai chiles, stemmed and minced**
- **3 cloves garlic, minced**
- **2 shallots, minced**
- **1 2" piece ginger, peeled and minced**
- **1 large tomato, cored and chopped**
- **2 cups canned coconut milk**
- **3 fresh or frozen Kaffir lime leaves**
- **¼ cup fresh lime juice, preferably from Kaffir or Key limes**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **2 cups cooked rice, for serving**

❶ Bring 2 cups water to a boil in a 6-qt. pot over high heat. Add crab and cook, covered, about 4 minutes. Remove crab from pot and set aside to let cool slightly. Strain and reserve cooking liquid. If using whole crab, twist off the claws, crack the claw shells with the back of a knife blade, and transfer to a bowl. Pry off and discard top shell of the crab's body, remove and discard the innards and fingerlike gills, and rinse out any sand that may be left inside. Roughly chop crab body into 3"–4" pieces and transfer to bowl with claws; set aside. (If using just legs and claws, chop them into 3" pieces and set aside.)

❷ Wipe out pot, add oil, and heat over medium heat. Add chiles, garlic, shallots, ginger, and tomato and cook, stirring often, until soft, about 5 minutes. Add reserved crab along with the coconut milk and Kaffir lime leaves and 2 cups water. Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until crab is warmed through. Stir in lime juice and season with salt and pepper. To serve, divide crab pieces between two bowls and ladle the cooking liquid over the top; serve with rice.

KUKU WA NAZI

(Chicken Stewed in Coconut Milk)

SERVES 4

The recipe for this fragrant dish (pictured on page 82) was given to us by Lela Abdulaziz, a Kenyan home cook.

- **¼ cup canola oil**
- **1½ tsp. ground turmeric**
- **4 cloves garlic, minced**
- **4 green or red Thai chiles, stemmed, seeded, and minced**
- **4 plum tomatoes, cored and minced**
- **1 medium red onion, minced**
- **4 skinless bone-in chicken legs and thighs, separated**
- **¼ cup fresh lime juice**
- **2 14-oz. cans coconut milk**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **4 cups cooked rice, for serving**
- **Finely chopped fresh cilantro, for garnish**

Heat the oil in a 6-qt. pot over medium-high heat. Add the turmeric, garlic, chiles, tomatoes, and onions and cook, stirring often, until the onions are caramelized, 20–25 minutes. Add chicken to pot along with lime juice and coconut milk. Bring mixture to a boil and reduce heat to medium-low; simmer, stirring occasionally, until chicken is tender, about 30 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. To serve, put rice into 4 serving bowls and spoon chicken and sauce over rice. Garnish with cilantro and season with more black pepper.

SAMAKI WA KUPAKA

(Grilled Whole Fish with Tamarind)

SERVES 2–4

This recipe, for a whole fish basted in a tart tamarind sauce (pictured on page 83), calls for a grilling basket, which allows you to turn the fish without damaging the skin; see page 108 for a source.

- **1 2–3-lb. whole fish, such as red snapper, porgy, or striped bass, cleaned**
- **Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **6 cloves garlic, minced**
- **2 green Thai chiles, stemmed, seeded, and minced**
- **1 2" piece ginger, peeled and minced**
- **Juice of 2 limes**
- **1 cup canned coconut milk**
- **¼ cup tamarind paste or 2 tbsp. tamarind concentrate (see page 108)**
- **½ tsp. curry powder**
- **½ tsp. ground coriander**
- **¼ tsp. cayenne pepper**
- **Canola oil, for brushing**

❶ Put fish into a 9" x 13" baking dish and cut three evenly spaced ¼"-deep crosswise slits into each side of the fish. Season fish cavity and skin with salt and pepper. Combine garlic, chiles, ginger, and lime juice in a small bowl and rub cavity and skin of fish with the garlic mixture. Cover dish with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 1 hour.

❷ Meanwhile, heat the coconut milk,

SWAHILI SPICES AND SEASONINGS

The cuisine of coastal East Africa is characterized by seafood, rice, couscous, and chicken dishes that are boldly seasoned with chiles and a bright palette of spices—many of them originally brought over from Asia by Arab traders centuries ago—and often tempered by the flavor of coconut. Cumin seeds ❶ are often cracked to release their earthy flavor before being added to celebratory meat and rice dishes, as well as to slow-simmered vegetable dishes like the stewed kidney beans described in the recipe on page 86. Ground turmeric ❷ lends a mellow spiciness and vibrant yellow color to East African sauces and to curries like the chicken stewed in coconut milk, above. Grated coconut ❸ is a cornerstone of Swahili cooking; cooks mix the meat with water to extract fresh coconut milk, which is often used to balance spicy, hot flavors in dishes like ginger crab, above. Curry powder ❹—a blend of ground spices that's usually sold at East African markets in small packets—allows cooks to add a burst of multidimensional flavor to marinades, curries, and stews. Fresh tamarind ❺—often soaked, seeded, and mashed into a paste, a product that can be bought in blocks and jars at markets—has a sour-sweet flavor that's crucial to Swahili grilled preparations like the grilled whole fish with tamarind, above. Coriander seeds ❻, a principal seasoning in the spiced beef flatbread described in the recipe on page 86, provide a vividly aromatic character to all kinds of foods. (See THE PANTRY, page 108, for sources.) —*Ben Mims*

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Preparing a Feast A cook gets ready to serve beef *biriyani* to guests at a wedding on Lamu Island. *Biriyanis*, vividly spiced rice and meat dishes of Indian and Persian origin, are a special-occasion dish for many people in coastal East Africa. This cook has overseen the preparation of the dish from start to finish, having slaughtered the cow himself and slow-simmered the meat with cardamom, chiles, cinnamon, and pepper in large steel pots. The *biriyani* will be served with numerous *achari*, or pickles—cucumber, lime, mango, and others—that were ordered months in advance by the bride's family from women in a nearby village who are known for their excellent versions of the flavorful condiments.

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tamarind, curry powder, coriander, and cayenne in a 2-qt. saucepan over low heat and cook, stirring often, until tamarind is dissolved (about 15 minutes for the paste or 1 minute for the concentrate). Remove pan from the heat and set aside. Build a medium-hot fire in a charcoal grill or heat a gas grill to medium-high. (Alternatively, arrange a rack 4" from broiler element and set oven to broil.) Brush the inside grates of grilling basket with oil. Uncover fish, transfer it to grilling basket, and brush with some of the tamarind sauce. Cook fish, flipping every few minutes and basting often with tamarind sauce, until cooked through, about 15 minutes. Transfer fish to a serving platter; serve hot or at room temperature.

COCONUT MILK

Coconut milk gives body and flavor to numerous Swahili dishes, including several described in the recipes on these pages, and is as essential as cow's or sheep's milk in many tropical parts of the world. Not to be confused with coconut juice—the clear liquid that collects in the shell—coconut milk must be extracted from the meat of the nut. It is thick and creamlike, with oils and sugars that make it ideal for braising meats and for bringing out the flavors of spices and aromatics, as well as for baking into cakes and pastries. In much of East Africa, coconut milk is made at home, from fresh coconuts, which grow in abundance along the Indian Ocean coast; cooks grate the sweet white meat, mix the grated coconut with water, and squeeze the mixture to extract the milk. Because it's hard to find super-fresh coconuts in most of the U.S., cooks here rely on canned coconut milk. Of the dozens of brands on the market, Mae Ploy and Chaokoh are the best: they have a rich, full flavor and silky texture. As with fresh cow's milk, a thicker cream will rise to the top, leaving a thinner, less rich liquid beneath; so, unless a recipe calls specifically for separating and using the cream layer alone, remember to shake the can before opening it and measuring out what you need. —*B.M.*

SAMAKI WA KUKAUSHA

(Tomato-and-Lime-Braised Fish)

SERVES 2-4

Braising a whole fish in an aromatic liquid yields moist, flavorful flesh (the dish is pictured on page 77).

1 2-3-lb. whole fish, such as red snapper, porgy, or striped bass, cleaned
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
2 tsp. minced fresh ginger
4 red or green Thai chiles, stemmed, seeded, and minced
3 cloves garlic, minced
3 tbsp. fresh lime juice
2 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
6 whole peeled canned tomatoes, plus ¼ cup juices from can, puréed
Cooked rice, for serving

❶ Put fish into a 9" x 13" baking dish. Cut three evenly spaced ¼"-deep crosswise slits into each side of the fish. Season fish cavity and skin with salt and pepper and rub outside of fish with half of the ginger, chiles, and garlic; cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

❷ Heat oven to 500°. Put remaining ginger, chiles, and garlic, along with lime juice, butter, puréed tomatoes, and ½ cup water, into a 2-qt. saucepan over medium heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until flavors meld, about 5 minutes; strain sauce. Uncover fish and pour tomato sauce over it. Bake, basting fish with pan juices, until flesh is cooked through, about 20 minutes. To serve, transfer fish to a serving platter and pour some of the juices from the pan over fish. Serve with rice.

PIRI-PIRI PRAWNS

SERVES 4

Piri-piri refers both to a kind of chile (the African bird's-eye) and to any of a variety of spicy red sauces made with chiles in many parts of Africa. (This dish is pictured on page 82.)

2 lbs. (about 15) large head-on, shell-on shrimp
¼ cup peanut oil
3 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
3 tbsp. fresh lime juice
1 tbsp. minced fresh cilantro
6 cloves garlic, minced
5 red Thai chiles, stemmed, seeded, and minced
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
Indian lime pickle or lime wedges, for serving (optional; see page 108)

❶ Working with one shrimp at a time, lay shrimp on its side. Make a ¼"-deep cut along length of the shrimp on its outer side. Pull out the vein with the tip of a knife and transfer shrimp a large bowl. Repeat with remaining shrimp. Add oil, lemon and lime juices, cilantro, garlic, and chiles; toss to coat. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour and up to 4 hours.

❷ Build a medium-hot fire in a charcoal grill or heat a gas grill to medium-high. (Alternatively, arrange an oven rack 4" from broiler and set oven to broil.) Transfer shrimp to a baking sheet and season with salt and pepper. Grill shrimp, turning once, until browned and cooked through, about 5 minutes. Serve with lime pickle or lime wedges, if you like.

MCHUZI WA MBAAZI

(Stewed Kidney Beans)

SERVES 6-8

Coconut milk gives these long-simmered beans (pictured on page 82) a smooth, supple texture that balances the bright flavors of the garlic, onion, and chiles.

1 lb. dried red kidney beans
2 cups canned coconut milk
2 tsp. cracked cumin seeds
1½ tsp. curry powder
1 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
4 red or green Thai chiles, stemmed, seeded, and minced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 medium yellow onion, minced
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Rinse beans; transfer to a 6-qt. pot. Add enough water to cover beans by 2". Bring to a boil; cook for 2 minutes. Remove pot from heat; cover. Let sit for 1 hour. Drain beans, return them to pot, and add 8 cups water. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until just tender, about 1½ hours. Stir in 1½ cups coconut milk, cumin, curry powder, salt, chiles, garlic, onion, and 1 cup water; cook, stirring often, until beans are very tender, about 20 minutes. Remove pot from heat; stir in remaining coconut milk. Season with salt and pepper. Let cool slightly before serving.

KHIMA CHAPATI

(Spiced Beef Flatbread)

SERVES 6

This East African snack—a cousin of the Indian snack mughlai paratha—calls for shaping dough into a spiral and flattening it before adding spicy beef and an egg and sealing the ingredients in a tidy packet. For step-by-step instructions on making this dish (pictured on page 77), GO TO SAVEUR.COM/FLATBREAD.

2 cups flour, plus more for rolling
½ tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
1 cup plus 2 tbsp. melted ghee (see page 108)
2 tsp. dried mint, crushed
2 tsp. garam masala
1 tsp. coriander seeds, cracked
1 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
1 tsp. cumin seeds, cracked
8 cloves garlic, minced
1 4" piece ginger, minced
1 lb. ground beef chuck
1 medium tomato, minced
2 tbsp. yogurt
3 sprigs cilantro, minced
4 red or green Thai chiles, stemmed, seeded, and minced
1 small red onion, minced
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
6 eggs

❶ In a large bowl, stir together flour, salt, and ½ cup water until a dough forms. Transfer dough to a lightly

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floured work surface and knead until smooth, 4–6 minutes. Divide dough into 6 pieces, roll into balls, and transfer to a round 9" dish. Pour 1 cup ghee over dough balls and cover dish with plastic wrap; let rest for 2 hours.

❷ Meanwhile, heat 2 tbsp. ghee in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium heat. Add mint, garam masala, coriander, chile flakes, cumin, garlic, and ginger and cook until fragrant, 1–2 minutes. Add beef, tomato, and yogurt and cook, stirring, for 10 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in cilantro, chiles, red onion, salt, and pepper; set meat mixture aside to let cool.

❸ Transfer dough balls to a work surface, reserving ghee in the baking dish. Working with one ball at a time, roll dough into a 10" circle. Brush 1 tsp. of the reserved ghee onto dough and dust with 1 tsp. flour. Starting from edge closest to you, begin making ½" accordion-like folds, laying one fold on top of the other until you have a single long, stacked strip of dough. Leaving dough strip on its side, so that the accordion pleats face you, twist the strip of dough into a spiral, tucking the loose end underneath. Using a rolling pin, flatten the spiral into an 8"–10" circle. Place one-sixth of the meat mixture in the center of the dough and form a well. Crack one egg into the center of the meat mixture. Fold edges of the dough over the egg so that the edges meet in the middle; pinch edges together to form a closed square packet. Transfer dough packet to a baking sheet, cover with a moist towel, and set aside; repeat with remaining dough circles, ghee, flour, meat mixture, and eggs; set dough packets aside.

❹ Working in 3 batches and wiping out skillet between each batch, heat 2 tbsp. of remaining reserved ghee in a 12" nonstick skillet over medium heat; add two of the dough packets and cook, flipping once, until golden brown and the egg inside has just set, about 12 minutes. Repeat with remaining ghee and dough packets.

THE GUIDE

Mombasa and Lamu Island, Kenya

Dinner for two with drinks and tip:
Inexpensive Under $20 **Moderate** $20–$40 **Expensive** Over $40

GETTING THERE

Virtuoso, a global travel service, arranges custom trips to Mombasa, Lamu Island, and other parts of East Africa. Visit www.saveur.com/virtuoso.

WHERE TO STAY

MOMBASA SERENA BEACH HOTEL Malindi Road, Mombasa (254/20/354-8771; www.serenahotels.com). Rates: $375–$475 double. In addition to being East Africa's largest port, Mombasa is also one of its most-traveled-to tourist destinations, thanks to the white-sand beaches nearby. This three-year-old hotel and resort, located next to the Mombasa National Marine Park, offers luxurious, artfully furnished rooms.

DIANI REEF BEACH RESORT AND SPA Diani Beach Road, Ukunda (254/40/320-2723; www.dianireef.com). Rates: $190–$330 double. With 20 rooms centered around a garden courtyard and 104 more facing the beach, this hotel offers comfortable lodging about 25 miles south of Mombasa.

BAITIL AMAN GUEST HOUSE Shela, Lamu Island (254/42/463-3022; www.baitilaman.com). Rates: $100–$210 double. A graceful 18th-century Swahili house on Lamu Island has been converted into this spare but elegant inn, with a pleasant inner courtyard, eight guest rooms, and a rooftop dining terrace where a range of Swahili specialties, including an excellent version of *samaki wa nazi* (a coconut-fish stew), are served by lantern light.

WHERE TO EAT

CAMEL'S JOINT Makadara Ground, Mombasa (254/11/072-867-947). Moderate. This sidewalk restaurant in the Old Town is known for its grilled tandoori barracuda and snacks like *khima chapati*, griddle-cooked chapati bread with an egg-and-minced beef filling.

JAHAZI COFFEE HOUSE Ndia Kuu Road, Mombasa (254/72/5896-8666). Inexpensive. At this restaurant, which occupies an 18th-century house in the heart of Mombasa's Old Town, try the "bitings," or appetizers, which include beef samosas and fried potato *bhajia* (fritters); full meals are served at ornate wooden tables carved in a workshop across the street.

SWAHILILAND HERITAGE RESTAURANT Leven House, Old Town, Mombasa (254/72/344-4666). Moderate. Occupying the first floor of a town house near Mombasa's Old Port, this community-run restaurant serves traditional Swahili dishes and snacks made by local women, including very good vegetable samosas.

TAMARIND MOMBASA Cement Silo Road, Nyali (www.tamarind.co.ke). Expensive. This upscale restaurant, with an outdoor dining room, is perched on a cliff overlooking Mombasa's Old Port. Highlights of the seafood-centric menu include the chile crab and the saffron-infused seafood casserole.

OLYMPIC Lamu Town, Lamu Island (254/72/866-7692). Inexpensive. This unpretentious café in Lamu Island's main town serves an excellent *samaki wa kupaka* (grilled whole snapper) as well as an outstanding prawn *biriyani*. Olympic also has the best lime *achari*—a tart-tasting pickle of lime and green chiles—on the island.

PEPONI HOTEL Shela, Lamu Island (254/42/463-3421; www.peponi-lamu.com). Expensive. Peponi's veranda could be considered the epicenter of "Little Europe," which is what Lamu Islanders call the jet-set crowd that frequents the high-end resorts and private vacation homes that have been built along the island's beaches. The hotel bar serves generous gin-and-tonics and exceptional chile-spiced prawns with coconut rice.

WHAT TO DO

MOMBASA OLD TOWN The streets of Mombasa's historic center are lined with snack stalls selling spiced Arabic coffee, *mandazi* (cardamom-scented fritters), flavorful chapatis (a kind of flatbread), *ugali* (a dense cornmeal porridge), fried lentil and potato *bhajia*, flash-fried cassava chips dusted with chile powder, lime-marinated grilled beef skewers, and much more.

MACKINNON MARKET, MOMBASA Located on Digo Road, just outside the Old Town, this is one of the largest covered markets on the East African coast. It comprises an encyclopedia of Swahili foodways, from fiery Zanzibar peppercorns to packets of Kenya-grown ginger-cardamom tea to jackfruit and soursops.

LAMU TOWN Near the waterfront in Lamu Island's principal town, numerous vendors sell a vibrant array of snacks and foodstuffs, including freshly made fruit juices.

MAP: THE M FACTORY

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Farmers Li Zhongzhou and Sun Guoying sit down to a meal of stir-fried dishes in their home in the village of Mutianyu, outside Beijing.

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A Stir-Fry Education

In Beijing, a cook reconnects with her heritage, one dish at a time

By Lillian Chou Photographs by Todd Coleman

THE STIR-FRY IS THE SCENT AND SOUND of my childhood. Every night, my mother, a native of Zhongshan, in southern China, made dinner using her trusty two-handled wok. My sisters and I loved to watch as her worn cleaver produced heaps of perfect meat and vegetable slices. She seemed to move to a music we couldn't hear, adding things to the wok, taking them away, scooping and tossing with her metal spatula, as the various ingredients coalesced into a dish we loved. We lived in New Jersey, shopped for groceries in New York's Chinatown, ate Chinese food daily, and spoke a blend of Mandarin and English. Then, when I was ten years old, my mother succumbed to stomach cancer. My sisters and I never spoke Mandarin again; our father, though himself an immigrant from Shanghai, had his hands full with four daughters and didn't insist upon our using the language the way our mother had. With her gone, we lost our connection to a larger Chinese community. In place of the nightly ritual of marinating and chopping, the clang and scrape of spatula against wok, the aroma of garlic and ginger that had filled the kitchen, our father could offer only Chinese takeout.

I did learn to cook, but not until after I'd left home. I ended up going to culinary school and working as a pastry chef in restaurants in New York, Korea, Japan, and Singapore. But in all my travels, I never made it to China. Back in New York, as an editor at *Gourmet* magazine, I was called upon to develop recipes from Shanxi, Xinjiang, and Shangrila, and I was astounded all over again by the range of dishes a wok could produce. Little by little, China was catching up with me; finally, I decided to let it.

I arrived in Beijing on a cold winter evening last year, determined to stay as long as it would take to master Mandarin and to understand, through cooking and eating, what it means to be Chinese. At first I was disappointed with what I ate in the city; the food was so different from my mother's fresh-tasting, delicately seasoned Cantonese cooking. But I've since come to appreciate the hearty dishes and the liberal use of vinegar, salt, and oil that characterize northern Chinese cooking. Besides, Beijing is a cosmopolitan city; I've met cooks from all over China, and they've happily instructed me in the ways of their respective regional cuisines. Stir-frying is the common denominator they all share—not a single technique, but a whole approach to cooking that encompasses many different methods for preparing dishes in a wok. At its most basic, it is the act of cooking quickly over high heat, with ingredients added to the wok in a measured progression so that each one cooks to the point of optimal flavor and texture; constant stirring and flipping ensures that every morsel gets equal exposure to the center of the wok, where the heat is the most intense. But as I go from kitchen to kitchen, I'm learning that stir-frying is a more sophisticated art than I'd ever imagined.

WANG MINGJUN—SLIM, BESPECTACLED, with a frenetic energy that makes her seem younger than her 49 years—has become my adopted *laoyi*, or aunt, and that's what I call her. I frequently visit her in her government-subsidized apartment complex in western Beijing. I met her through her niece, Annie, a fellow ABC (American-born Chinese) living in Beijing. When I complimented Laoyi on her wok, she hustled me right over to her neighborhood market to buy one just like it: cast-iron, curved like a bell, with three stubby feet. "You must have a proper wok!" she proclaimed in her guttural Beijing accent. This is a refrain I've heard

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from many cooks here. A good wok is the foundation of good cooking; stir-frying is said to activate food with the wok's energy. It will be years, though, before my wok acquires the well-seasoned patina that Laoyi's has. That seasoning, accumulated over thousands of stir-fries, not only imparts flavor but also acts as a natural nonstick surface.

Laoyi's small kitchen is fairly typical: a gas stove with two powerful burners, no oven, a crock pot always on the boil. Before I'm even through the door, she's pushing snacks on me: "Have a chicken leg. You should eat something before we start to cook." Laoyi is adamant about how things are made, even if the dish is something so seemingly simple as a stir-fry of tomatoes and eggs. Her tomato wedges, absolutely uniform in size to ensure even cooking, are piled on a cutting board along with tidy piles of sliced garlic and chives. Because precise timing is crucial in stir-frying, everything must be within easy reach of the wok, which Laoyi allows to get very hot before she begins swirling peanut oil around inside it.

Laoyi's stove is enclosed on three sides by a plastic spatter guard; it's as if she's cooking inside a movie theater popcorn machine. She seasons with an expert hand, bringing mediocre winter tomatoes to life with a little salt and sugar. She sets down plates of food along with small bowls of rice on a card table in her living room, which also serves as her bedroom. I sit on the bed; she sits on the adjoining sofa. "The balance of flavors is everything," she says, and as I tuck into the fluffy eggs and salty-sweet tomatoes, I have to agree.

Just a few elements—wok, oil, a handful of ingredients—can produce endlessly varied results depending on how a cook chooses to use them.

If you're using high-quality ingredients, there's all the more reason to opt for a straightforward stir-frying technique that will allow the food's true character to shine through. No one has made this clearer to me than Pan Suefen. A 50-something native of Taiwan, she is as gentle and serene as Laoyi is brash and intense. Her lilting southern accent is closer to what I grew up hearing; her light touch in the kitchen is familiar, too. Early on, we commiserated over Beijing's gut-busting local cuisine, and I soon learned that beneath Suefen's gentle demeanor lies a steely will: until recently, she owned a Taiwanese restaurant here, but when she started feeling pressure to adjust her dishes for local tastes, she abruptly closed it.

At home, she remains fanatical about sourcing her ingredients. For instance, to make sure she gets the intensity of flavor she requires, she dries fresh shiitake mushrooms herself in her living room, spreading them out on newspapers that cover every available surface. Their earthy taste and fragrance seem to magnify many times over in the process.

For such a fussed-over ingredient, Suefen insists, no sauce, no aromatics are called for; just heat, oil, salt, and sugar, applied with care. The mushrooms are cooked with bok choy, and what might be a rather austere dish in lesser hands bursts with flavor when it emerges from Suefen's wok. As she slices leeks to stir-fry with strips of pork for another dish, she is absolutely precise—everyone I know here has incredible knife skills. While the leeks cook, the pork marinates. The entire, deliberate progression is utterly economical. Not a moment or a speck of food is wasted.

Another of my teachers is Deng Haiyan, a 35-year-old native of Shandong province, on China's northeastern coast. She works as a nanny and cook for a British family I know in Beijing's upscale Chaoyang neighborhood; everyone calls her Maggie. Most of the time she speaks softly with her head bowed, but when she's in the kitchen, she's proud, almost bossy, particularly when stir-frying her specialty: *hong shao rou*, or red-cooked pork belly. In red cooking, meat is simmered in a rich soy sauce reduction. Maggie stir-fries the pork, simmers it until it's very tender, and then stir-fries it again to create a concentrated, intensely savory flavor.

What strikes me above all as I observe all of these women at the stove is the way that just a few elements—wok, oil, a handful of ingredients—can produce endlessly varied results depending on how a cook chooses to use them. When I ask Maggie if she can demonstrate the famed southern Chinese velveting technique, in which meat is marinated in a blend of egg white and cornstarch and then blanched in oil to seal in its juices, she nods smartly, picks up the chicken and celery she happens to have at hand, and gets to work. In minutes, she produces the tenderest chicken I've ever eaten—silky without being greasy, light and luscious at the same time.

If Mingjun is my *laoyi*, then Sun Guoying is my *popo* (grandmother). She is 75 years old and lives at the base of the Great Wall, in the village of Mutianyu, on the outskirts of greater Beijing. When my friend William, who grew up across the road from Guoying's low-slung stone farmhouse, first took me to meet her, I instinctively gave her a very un-Chinese hug, which made her laugh. I guess it was her easygoing cheerfulness that put me at ease, too.

After a lifetime of farming, Guoying is indefatigable. When I try to help with prepping ingredients, she snatches the cleaver from me, her eyes smiling. Her husband, Li Zhongzhou, lights a wood fire under the *chuantong guo*, a traditional built-in wok. The fire's smoke subtly infuses everything that passes through the *chuantong guo*, and its powerful heat puts a sear on food in a matter of seconds.

Guoying makes the best noodle stir-fry I've tasted, though she finds it hilarious when I wax on about it. She calls it *tian tian chao mian*—everyday fried noodles. Just as Suefen did with her pork-and-leek stir-fry, Guoying cooks the vegetables before the meat, adding carrots and onions to the wok first and stirring them until they begin to soften. When it's time, she adds a fistful of ground pork; meat is a luxury, something she typically uses more as a condiment than as the centerpiece of a dish. Finally, wheat noodles are stirred in to bring all the elements together.

I notice that Guoying has another wok in addition to her wood-fired one; it's bell-shaped with three feet, like mine. I tell her that I envy its wood handle, split and mended with wire though it is; it's so much more practical than the metal handle on my newer model. Her wok's well-seasoned interior is rippled with tiny fissures, like the face of someone very old. It's beautiful. To my great surprise, she insists that I take it with me when I go. And then I understand. "You'll come back and see me," she says, fixing me with her smiling eyes. The wok is our bond.

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Sun Guoying plates a dish of stir-fried eggs and chives.

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Kenya's Bounty

An eclectic cuisine flourishes along Kenya's coast

By Shane Mitchell · Photographs by James Fisher

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Step One

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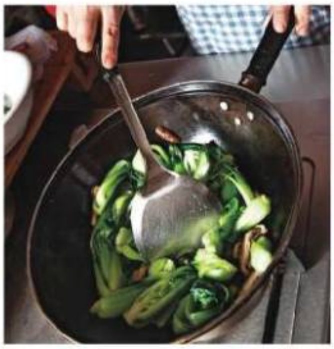


SERVES 2–4

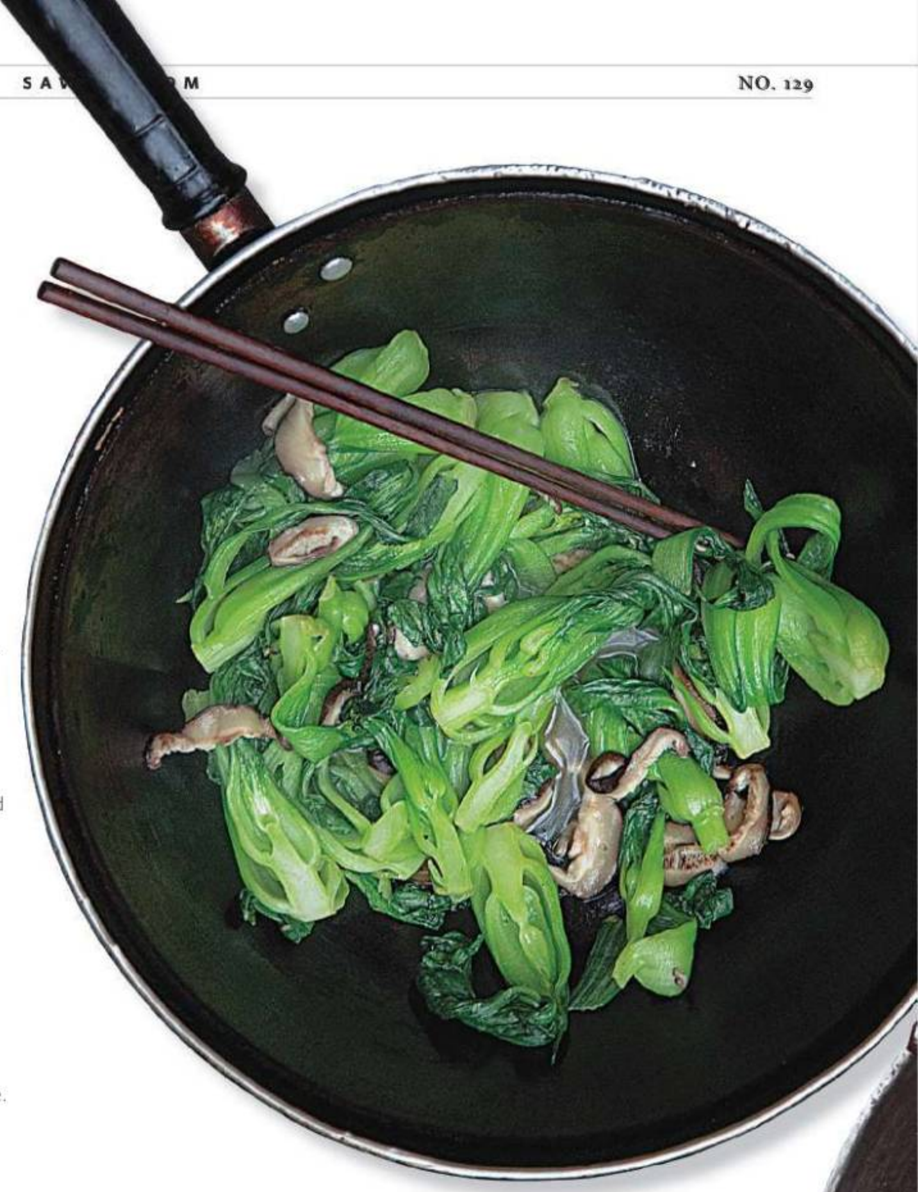
- 6 large dried mushrooms, such as shiitake
- 1 tbsp. canola oil
- ½ lb. small Shanghai bok choy, halved lengthwise (about 10 heads; see page 108)
- ¼ tsp. sugar
- Kosher salt, to taste

❶ Put mushrooms into a medium bowl of water and soak for 2 hours. Drain; squeeze any excess water from the mushrooms and cut off stems. Cut mushrooms into ¼"-thick slices. Heat a 14" wok (or stainless-steel skillet) over high heat until wok begins to smoke. Add oil around the edge of the wok and swirl to coat the bottom and sides. Add mushrooms and cook, stirring and tossing constantly, until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Transfer mushrooms to a plate; set aside.

❷ Return wok to high heat until it begins to smoke. Add bok choy cut side down, along with 2 tbsp. water, and cook, without stirring, until the water evaporates, about 1 minute.

❸ Add sugar and season with salt. Vigorously stir and toss bok choy until it's bright green and wilted, about 1 more minute.

❹ Return mushrooms to wok, toss to combine, and cook until the flavors meld, about 30 seconds. Transfer mushrooms and bok choy to a serving platter and serve hot or at room temperature.



Donggu Pei Shucai

Stir-Fried Mushrooms and Bok Choy

My friend Pan Suefen refers to this kind of preparation as a "dry" stir-fry, because there's no sauce. The focus here is on earthy mushrooms and brightly flavored bok choy, exploited to their fullest to produce a final result that is greater than the sum of its parts. I love how the dried mushrooms, reconstituted in water, take on a satisfying, slightly chewy texture and a deep umami flavor in the hot oil. The bok choy undergoes a pleasing transformation as well: the crunchy white stem develops a caramelized flavor as it's left alone for a minute with its cut surface in direct contact with the wok, and the leaves wilt slightly, acquiring a mild sweetness as they cook.

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Hong Shao Rou

Red-Cooked Pork Belly

The technique used in this recipe, called *hong shao*, or red cooking, is a particular favorite of mine; you'll never taste meat so luscious or sauce with such concentrated flavor. When Deng Haiyan, a cook I know, applies it to rich, fatty pork belly, the results are spectacular. Before she does anything, she parboils the pork belly to jump-start its tenderizing and to render out some of its fat. Then she stir-fries the pork to brown it and simmers it in a braising liquid made with dark soy sauce and sugar until much of the liquid has been reduced and absorbed. Finally, she cranks up the heat again and stir-fries the contents of the wok a second time to further concentrate the sauce. While all of the dishes described here would be served along with a bowl of rice—the centerpiece of any Chinese meal—this pork belly's spicy, sweet, and salty sauce suffuses and complements rice like no other.

SERVES 4

- Kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 1 lb. boneless, skin-on pork belly, cut into ³⁄₄" cubes
- 1 tbsp. canola oil
- 2 red chiles, such as Fresno, roughly chopped
- 1 ½" piece ginger, peeled and thinly sliced crosswise
- 1 leek, white and light green parts only, roughly chopped
- 1½ tsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. dark soy sauce
- 3 tbsp. mashed red fermented tofu plus 2 tsp. liquid from jar (see page 108)
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 pods star anise

❶ Bring 6 cups salted water to a boil in a 14" wok (or a pot). Add pork and cook for 5 minutes. Drain pork and set aside. Wipe out wok (or use a stainless-steel skillet instead). Set over high heat until wok begins to smoke. Add oil around edge of wok, swirling to coat bottom and sides. Add chiles, ginger, and leeks and cook, tossing constantly, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add reserved pork and cook, tossing often, for 3 minutes.

❷ Add sugar, soy sauce, tofu and its liquid, and salt and cook, tossing, until ingredients are browned, about 6 minutes.

❸ Add 2½ cups water, bay leaves, and star anise; boil. Reduce heat to medium low, cover, and simmer until pork is tender, about 40–50 minutes.

❹ Uncover, increase heat to high, and cook, stirring, until liquid reduces to 2 tbsp., about 15 minutes.

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Xihongshi Chao Jidan

Stir-Fried Tomato and Eggs

When I cook this dish, I'm always mindful of Wang Mingjun's advice: "If the wok isn't hot enough, the food will stick." Eggs can be especially sticky, so you want to make sure the wok is good and hot before adding the oil and beginning to cook. In a traditional stir-fry, meat—or, in this case, beaten egg—goes into the wok first, so it can cook evenly without any other ingredients to come between it and the wok's hot surface. The egg comes out of the wok before the tomatoes go in to prevent overcooking, then the tomatoes and garlic are heated just long enough to soften slightly. Finally, the eggs are returned to the wok to warm through and mingle with the softened tomatoes, the fragrant garlic, and the seasoned juices. As with any stir-fry, I have the ingredients for this dish prepped and close at hand before heating my wok; the rapid-fire nature of this preparation, in particular, requires undivided attention.

SERVES 2-4

- 4 eggs
- 4 tbsp. canola oil
- 3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 2 medium tomatoes, cored, each cut into 8 wedges
- 1 tsp. sugar
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 1 scallion or 2 garlic chives, thinly sliced crosswise

❶ Crack eggs into a medium bowl and beat lightly with a fork or chopsticks.

❷ Heat a 14" wok (or stainless-steel skillet) over high heat until wok begins to smoke. Add 1 tbsp. oil around edge of wok and swirl to coat the bottom and sides. Pour in eggs around edges of wok. Cook, stirring once or twice with chopsticks or a spoon to break eggs into large curds, until eggs are fluffy but not browned, about 60 seconds.

❸ Transfer eggs to a plate and set aside. Wipe out wok, return to high heat until smoking, and add remaining oil around edge of wok, swirling to coat the bottom and sides.

❹ Add garlic and tomatoes and cook, tossing constantly, until tomatoes begin to soften, about 1 minute. Stir in sugar and the reserved eggs and cook, stirring and tossing often, until eggs are heated through, about 30 seconds. Season with salt and garnish with scallions.

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Cong Bao Rou Si

Stir-Fried Pork with Leeks

I'm grateful to Pan Suefen for sharing this recipe, which calls for a "reverse" stir-fry technique, in which the vegetables are cooked before the meat. It tends to be forgiving for a novice stir-fryer, since vegetables release water as they cook and won't stick the way that meat will if the wok isn't quite hot enough. This stir-fry also illustrates the importance of the knife in stir-fry cooking. I slice the leeks the way Suefen showed me, on the diagonal, to increase the surface area exposed to the wok; that way, they wilt and release their fragrance faster. And I slice the pork thinly so that it will brown quickly before it loses its moisture. (See "Blade-Ready," page 104, for tips on slicing meat for stir-frying.)

Step One

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SERVES 2–4

- **10 oz. boneless pork butt, frozen for 20 minutes and cut into 2" x ⅛" strips**
- **1 tsp. Asian sesame oil**
- **1 tsp. dark soy sauce**
- **½ tsp. cornstarch**
- **¼ tsp. sugar**
- **2 cloves garlic, minced**
- **2 tbsp. canola oil**
- **1 leek, white and pale green parts only, cut diagonally into ¼"-thick slices**

❶ In a medium bowl, combine the pork, sesame oil, soy sauce, cornstarch, sugar, and half the garlic; let sit for 15 minutes.

❷ Heat a 14" wok (or stainless-steel skillet) over high heat until wok begins to smoke. Add 1 tbsp. oil around the edge of the wok and swirl to coat the bottom and sides. Add the leeks and cook, stirring and tossing constantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Transfer leeks to a plate and set aside.

❸ Return wok to high heat and add remaining oil around edge of wok, swirling to coat the bottom and sides. Add the pork mixture and remaining garlic and cook, stirring and tossing constantly, until the pork is browned, about 2 minutes.

❹ Add reserved leeks to the wok and cook, stirring and tossing often, until just tender, about 1 minute.

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Stir-Fry Essentials

A glossary of tools and ingredients

Tools

A **wok** ❶ is the central cooking vessel in Chinese kitchens. Many Chinese woks have two round handles, but models with a single, long handle are becoming increasingly common because they are easier to maneuver. Woks are made from a variety of materials, but carbon steel is the best because it heats up quickly and conducts heat evenly, and one that is 14 inches in diameter will work well in most home kitchens. Though round-bottomed woks (like the one pictured) are typically used in China, flat-bottomed ones work better on most American stoves. For the constant stirring and tossing of ingredients required in stir-frying, Chinese home cooks use a **wok spatula** ❷, which has a rimmed edge designed for the task. Many cooks in restaurant kitchens use a **ladle** ❸ for the same purpose. **Perforated strainers** ❹ are employed to scoop out boiled foods like dumplings, while **wire strainers** ❺ are used in blanching and velveting to retrieve food quickly before it overcooks. Because ingredients to be stir-fried must be cut into small and uniform pieces, a sharp knife is indispensable. A **cleaver** ❻ is the only knife used in most Chinese kitchens; its combination of heft and sharpness makes it suitable for a wide variety of tasks. Traditional models are made of forged carbon steel, which holds its edge longer than stainless steel. **Scissors** ❼ are used to snip soaked noodles and other soft foods.

Another important tool is the **wok brush**, which can be made out of twigs ❽, bamboo ❾, or plastic ❿; its stiff bristles are used for cleaning the wok's surface without soap, which would damage the wok's seasoned patina. A **mortar and pestle** ⓫ is used for crushing everything from garlic to Sichuan peppercorns.

Sauces and Cooking Liquids

Light soy sauce ⓬ is the most widely used Chinese flavoring. It is made from fermented soybeans and grain, usually wheat, and the best ones are brewed and aged. Its flavors range from salty to earthy and vary greatly depending on the brand. It is thinner and saltier than regular soy sauce and is used to flavor light-colored foods like fish and chicken, as well as stir-fries made with clear sauces. **Dark soy sauce** ⓭ is thicker and heavier, with a concentrated and complex flavor and a little sweetness; this sauce is crucial for "red-cooked" dishes like red-cooked pork belly (see page 93 for a recipe). In addition to soy sauces, cooking wines are used regularly in stir-fries. **Liao jiu** ⓮ is a generic term for cooking wine made from grain, usually rice. Light cooking wines are used to add aroma and a subtle aromatic flavor to dishes. Most rice wines sold in supermarkets have added sodium, which renders them undrinkable though still suitable for cooking. Higher-quality **huang jiu** ⓯, or yellow wine, which can be found in Chinese liquor stores, ranges in color from

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pale golden to amber and can be used for either cooking or drinking; the best comes from Shaoxing. **Black rice vinegar** 16 has a taste similar to balsamic vinegar's; it's used in braises and as a dipping sauce. Toasted **sesame oil** 17 is typically added to marinades or toward the end of cooking, for added flavor.

Dry Seasonings and Ingredients

Cornstarch 18 and **potato starch** 19 are used to thicken sauces and for dusting meat and fish before frying. They also help to seal in succulence in velveted preparations such as the stir-fried chicken with celery on page 98. Potato starch has a stronger thickening ability, so use about a third less of it than you would cornstarch. **Fresh ginger** 20 is one of the most basic flavor components in stir-frying and imparts an indispensable lemony zing. Small **dried red chiles** 21, about an inch or two in length, are often cooked whole so they won't release too much of their heat. Look for supple, bright red ones, as they fade and lose potency with age. **White pepper** 22, rather than black, is preferred in Chinese kitchens for its deep, musky flavor and the fact that it will not mar the appearance of the dish. **Dried mushrooms** 23 which are rehydrated before use, add texture and heft to stir-fries and enhance the flavor of sauces and other foods. **Fermented red tofu** 24 is fermented in brine with red rice, salt, and rice wine. It imparts a distinctive, pungent flavor to braised dishes. *—L. C.*

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SERVES 2-4

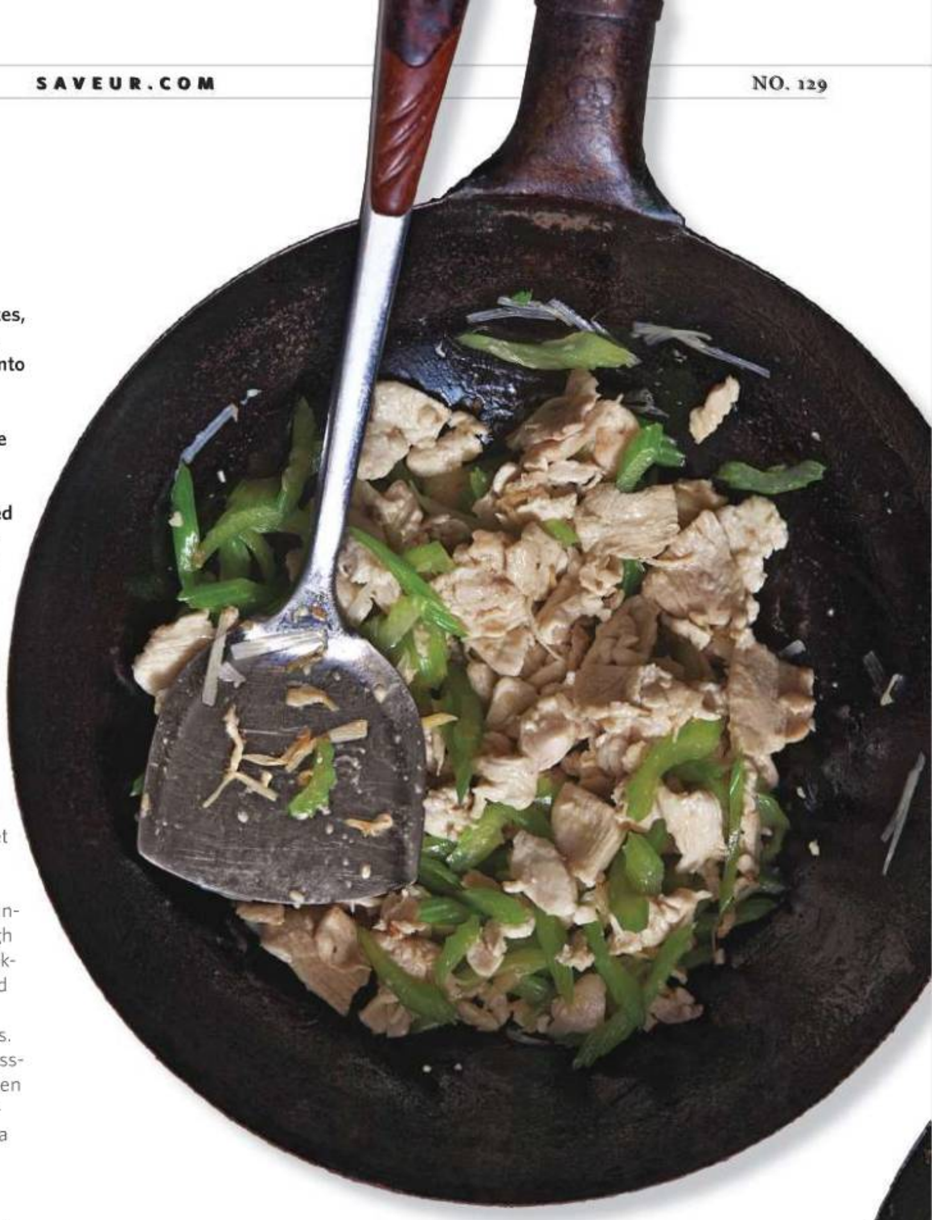
- 2 tsp. cornstarch
- 2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, frozen for 20 minutes, halved lengthwise, and cut crosswise into 1/8"-thick strips
- 1 egg white
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 3 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 1/2" piece ginger, peeled and julienned
- 1 leek, halved crosswise and julienned
- 5 ribs celery, cut diagonally into 1/4"-thick slices
- 1 1/2 tbsp. light soy sauce

❶ Combine cornstarch, chicken, egg white, and a pinch of salt in a medium bowl and toss vigorously to combine; set aside for 10 minutes.

❷ Heat a 14" wok (or stainless-steel skillet) over high heat until wok starts smoking. Add 2 tbsp. oil around edge of wok and swirl to coat the bottom and sides. Add chicken and cook, tossing constantly, until chicken is opaque, about 1-2 minutes. Transfer chicken to a plate and set aside.

❸ Return wok to high heat and add remaining oil around edge of wok. Add ginger and leeks and cook, tossing constantly, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add celery and cook, stirring and tossing often, until crisp-tender, 1 minute.

❹ Add reserved chicken and juices from plate back to wok, along with soy sauce. Cook, tossing, until chicken is cooked, 1-2 minutes.



Jirou Chao Qincai

Stir-Fried Chicken with Celery

Marinating meat before cooking is an essential step in most stir-fries. In this dish, a mix of egg white and cornstarch coats the chicken and a quick blanching in a little oil in the wok preserves its succulence—a technique called velveting. Like the recipe for red-cooked pork belly on page 93, this one comes from Deng Haiyan, one of the most adept cooks I've met here in Beijing. Once she's blanched the chicken, she sets it aside. Then, julienned ginger and leeks go into the wok and release their perfume into the hot oil; celery, added next, cooks until crisp-tender and faintly sweet. The payoff comes when the chicken is reintroduced to the wok: the cornstarch-egg white coating soaks up the flavors of the aromatics, and the bright, crunchy celery contrasts beautifully with the silky texture and delicate flavor of the chicken.

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Tian Tian Chao Mian

Everyday Fried Noodles

One of the best things about living in northern China is the abundance of noodles, and this simple, salty-sweet stir-fry of silken noodles and crisp-tender vegetables is one of my favorite ways to use them. When my friend Sun Guoying makes it, she introduces dry and wet ingredients to the wok in a strictly prescribed order. First, carrots and onions are stir-fried to draw out their sweetness and are then removed from the wok before they overcook. Next, ground pork is browned with minced ginger and garlic, which release their fragrance into the hot oil. Dark soy sauce and rice cooking wine—two staples of Chinese stir-frying—are added and boiled along with sugar to create a concentrated sauce that will cling to the parboiled noodles, which complete their cooking in the wok. What I love best are the grace notes added at the very end: the strips of fresh, salted cucumber and the drizzle of fragrant sesame oil.

SERVES 2–4

- ½ small seedless cucumber, peeled and julienned
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 3 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 medium carrot, julienned
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- ¼ lb. ground pork
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 1" piece ginger, minced
- 6 scallions, minced
- 1½ tbsp. dark soy sauce
- 1½ tbsp. rice cooking wine
- 1½ tsp. sugar
- 2 cups bean sprouts
- 6 oz. dried flat noodles (see page 108), boiled and rinsed under cold water
- 1 tbsp. Asian sesame oil

❶ Toss cucumbers and a pinch of salt together in a small bowl; let sit 5 minutes. Heat a 14" wok (or stainless-steel skillet) over high heat until it begins to smoke. Add 1 tbsp. oil around edge of wok; swirl to coat bottom and sides. Add carrots and onions; cook until softened, about 1 minute. Transfer to a plate; set aside.

❷ Return wok to high heat and add remaining oil. Add pork, garlic, ginger, and half the scallions; cook, breaking pork into small pieces, until browned, 3–4 minutes.

❸ Add soy sauce, wine, sugar, bean sprouts, and carrots and onions. Cook, stirring, until hot, about 30 seconds.

❹ Add cucumbers, remaining scallions, noodles, and sesame oil; cook, tossing, until hot, about 1 minute. Season with salt.

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IN THE SAVEUR

KITCHEN

Discoveries and Techniques from Our Favorite Room in the House » Edited by Todd Coleman

Pure Pleasure

TODD COLEMAN

WHO DOESN'T love banana bread? It's delicious, easy to make, and possibly the best use for overripe fruit ever invented. Inspired by Dan Koeppel's article about the uncertain fate of bananas ("Fruit of the Future," page 35), I recently went on a baking spree in the SAVEUR test kitchen and was reminded of just how adaptable this quick bread is. For the first few batches, I decided to depart from the standard lineup of ingredients. In one version ❸, I used raisins in addition to the customary nuts. In another, I used butter instead of oil, which resulted in a drier crumb ❹; that banana bread tasted great warm with some strawberry jam. In yet another, I omitted the baking soda (which causes bananas to darken), resulting in a blonder hue ❶. I even made a loaf containing whole chunks of ripe, creamy banana ❷. No version satisfied me more, though, than my very own mom's. Her recipe calls for oil, buttermilk (for a pleasant tanginess), and no fewer than three bananas. Mom's squat loaf ❺ has a sugary crust and a dense, tender crumb studded with chopped pecans. Trying to improve on perfection, I increased the amount of buttermilk to create a fluffier version ❻, but beyond that, I didn't mess with a good thing. —*Ben Mims*

MOM'S BANANA BREAD

SERVES 6–8

This exceptionally moist quick bread (pictured at bottom right in the photo) is based on a recipe from Judy Mims, the mother of SAVEUR's assistant kitchen director, Ben Mims.

- **Butter, for greasing pan**
- **1 cup flour, plus more for pan**
- **¾ tsp. baking soda**
- **¼ tsp. kosher salt**
- **1 cup sugar**
- **½ cup canola oil**
- **⅓ cup buttermilk**
- **1 tsp. vanilla**
- **1 egg plus 1 egg yolk**
- **⅔ cup chopped pecans**
- **3 very ripe bananas, mashed**

Heat oven to 350°. Grease a 9" x 5" x 2¾" loaf pan with butter and dust with flour; set pan aside. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, and salt; set aside. Whisk together sugar, oil, buttermilk, vanilla, egg, and egg yolk in a medium bowl until smooth. Pour wet ingredients over dry ingredients and whisk until just combined. Add pecans and mashed bananas and whisk gently to combine. Pour batter into prepared pan and bake until golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the middle of the loaf comes out clean, 60–65 minutes. Let cool for 30 minutes before slicing and serving.

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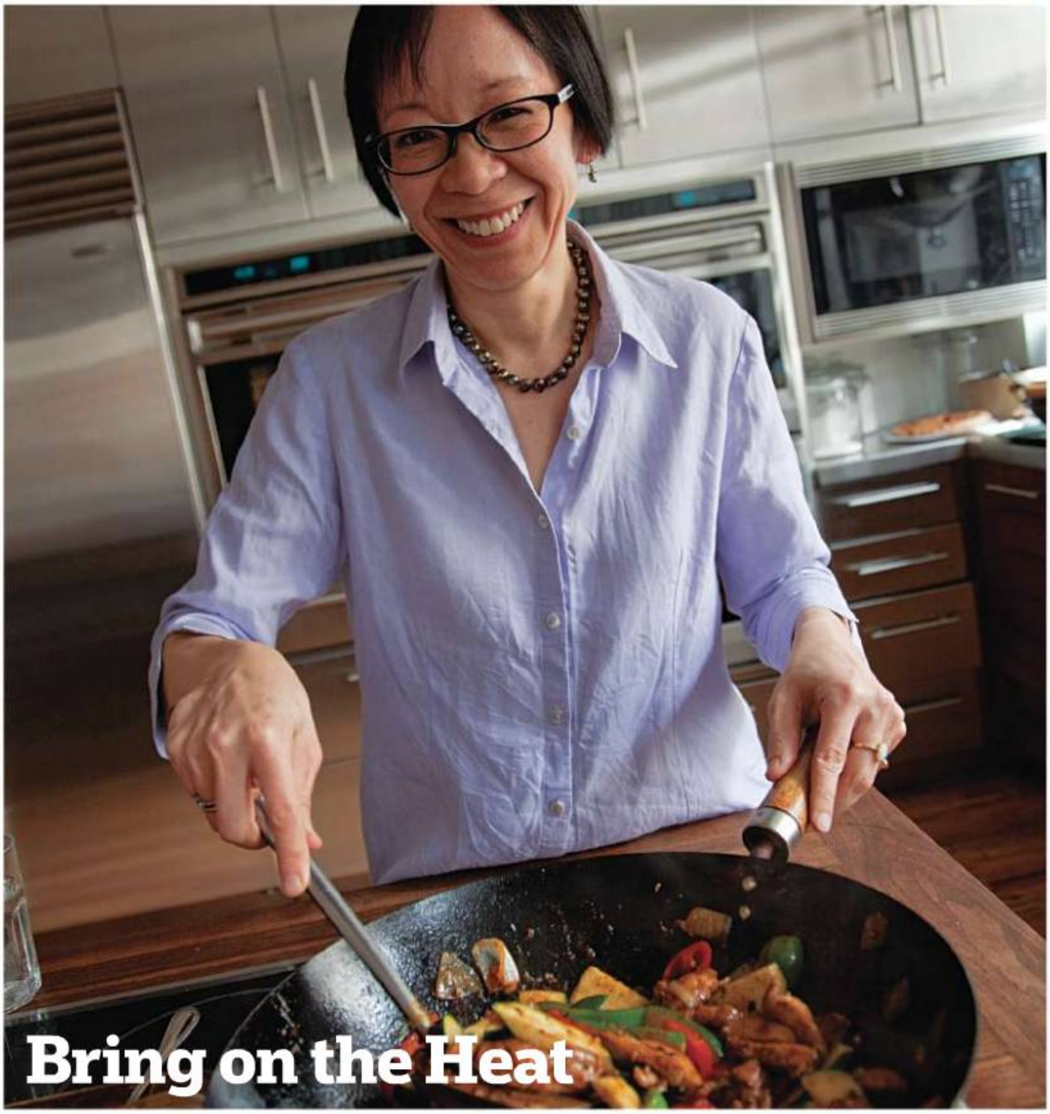

Bring on the Heat

WHEN WE started testing the recipes for "A Stir-Fry Education" (see page 88), we quickly realized that we'd need to make some adjustments. The recipes came from Chinese cooks, and most home kitchens in China have gas stoves that deliver a lot more heat than the kinds we have in the States. Replicating the effects of such high heat would take some doing. So, we turned to our friend Grace Young, who, in her cookbooks and her travels, has explored the ways cooks around the world have adapted stir-frying to different environments. The spicy chicken stir-fry she made when she paid a visit to the SAVEUR test kitchen was an ideal example: given to her by a native of Myanmar with a Chinese father, it contained typically Burmese ingredients like cumin and chili powder, and not a drop of soy sauce. The dish served as a perfect platform for teaching us a few other canny adaptations—namely, how to make up for our weaker heat source. First, Grace waited until the wok (a flat-bottomed one, better adapted to Western cook tops) was searing hot before swirling in the oil. Then, after adding the meat, she left it, undisturbed, in the very center of the wok for a full minute before tossing it. "In Asia, whenever you stir-fry meat, there's so much heat that you can immediately start cooking," she explained. "But in the U.S., you have to let the meat sit, or it will never sear." Next, Grace added bell peppers and, a short while later, zucchini. Always, she added ingredients in small batches. "If you crowd the wok, you'll take down the heat," Grace said. "And once you've lost the heat, it's almost like you've killed the fire of the food itself." Those are words for a stir-fry cook to live by. —*Karen Shimizu*

Cookbook author Grace Young in the SAVEUR test kitchen, above.

BURMESE CHILE CHICKEN

SERVES 4

This dish is based on a recipe in *Stir-Frying to the Sky's Edge* by Grace Young (Simon & Schuster, 2010).

- 1 lb. skinless, boneless chicken thighs, cut into 1"-thick strips
- 3 tbsp. canola oil
- 1½ tsp. cornstarch
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 onion, cut into ¾" pieces
- 2 tsp. sweet paprika
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 1" piece ginger, peeled and minced
- 2 bell peppers (1 green, 1 red), cored and cut into 1" pieces
- 2 tbsp. fish sauce
- 1 large Anaheim or poblano chile, cut diagonally into ¼"-thick slices
- 1 medium zucchini, halved lengthwise and cut diagonally into ¼"-thick slices
- ½ tsp. chili powder
- 4 cups cooked rice, for serving

❶ Combine chicken, 1 tbsp. oil, 1 tsp. cornstarch, salt and pepper in a bowl; let marinate for 15 minutes.

❷ Heat a 14" wok over high heat. Add 1 tbsp. oil. Add onions; cook until softened, 1–2 minutes. Push onions to side; add remaining oil with chicken, arranging it in a single layer. Cook, without stirring, for 1 minute. Continue cooking, tossing vigorously, until chicken is opaque, about 30 seconds. Add paprika, cumin, garlic, and ginger; cook, tossing constantly, for 30 seconds. Add peppers; cook, stirring constantly, until they begin to soften, 2–3 minutes. Stir in fish sauce and cook until almost all the liquid has evaporated, about 1 minute. Add chiles and zucchini; cook for 30 seconds. Stir together remaining cornstarch and ⅓ cup cold water in a bowl; pour around edge of wok. Cook until chicken is cooked and sauce has thickened, 1–2 minutes. Stir in chili powder; season with salt and pepper. Serve with rice.

TODD COLEMAN

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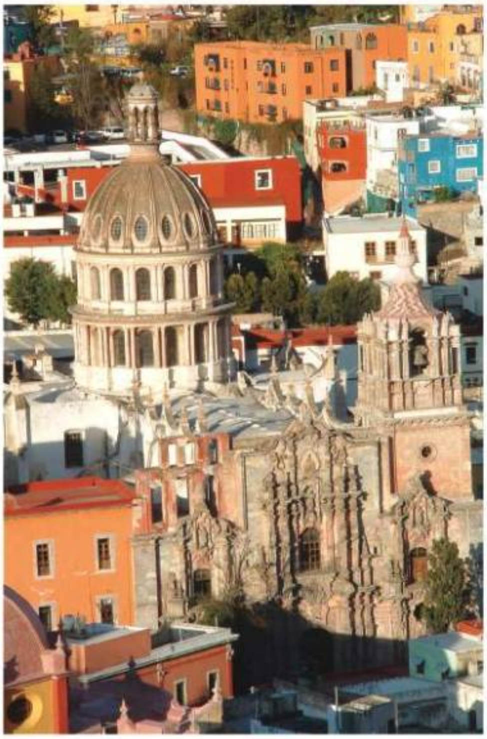
PRECIOUS MEXICO

ONCE RICH IN SILVER, GUANAJUATO HAS A CUISINE NOW WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN GOLD



LOCATED IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS OF MEXICO, Guanajuato was one of the first areas of Mexico colonized by the Spanish due to its rich silver deposits. For centuries, almost half of the world's silver came from Guanajuato's mines. And as you might imagine, the namesake capital city in this central Mexican state overflowed with money and Spanish colonizers looking to make their fortunes.

Now, 200 years after Miguel Hidalgo initiated the Mexican independence movement in the nearby city of Dolores, it's a UNESCO-designated World Heritage Site and one of the most beautiful cities in Mexico.

Known for its charm, Guanajuato draws students and well-heeled travelers alike to its winding, cobblestone streets. They mingle with artists and locals at chic bars and inspiring salsa clubs, admire ornate churches and palaces, and visit Diego Rivera's birthplace, now a museum. Another one of the state's colonial jewels is San Miguel de Allende, a small town that has become a mecca for travelers. There, houses exhibit a painter's palette of colors—yellows, reds, pinks—and the square in the center of town is punctuated by a stunning colonial church that looks like a fairy-tale castle when lit up at night.

A Food Lover's Paradise

The only thing that compares to the glorious vistas of Guanajuato is its exhilarating cuisine. In keeping with its colonial influence, local cooks have a profound love of pork, made clear by the menus at modern restaurants that each put their own spin on tradition. Throughout the state's bustling markets you'll find piles of *carnitas* — pork that's braised until tender then browned in its own fat — and can indulge your palette with tacos filled with luscious meat and topped with a smooth, soupy guacamole made with a touch of cream by local vendors.

If you're looking for a little diversity, there's another guacamole created by Guanajuatenses. Instead of serving the chunky avocado mash with tortilla chips, cooks pair it with crunchy pork skins called *chicharrones* that are used for dipping, or are stirred into the mash. Guanajuato also has a *torta* (the beloved native sandwich) like no other in Mexico, made with a crusty roll called a *bolillo* and filled with avocado slices, a hard-boiled egg, and crunchy *chicharrones*. And if you're a completist, you'll want to try nothing while you're there, specifically tacos of nothing — or *tacos de nada* — which are tortillas fried until the beans seem to melt in your mouth.

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Blade-Ready

One of the rules of stir-frying (see "A Stir-Fry Education," page 88) is that ingredients must be cut into precisely uniform pieces so that they cook evenly in the wok. As hard as we tried, though, we couldn't achieve the thin, perfectly even slices of meat called for in the recipes for stir-fried pork with leeks and stir-fried chicken with celery (pages 95 and 98, respectively). Invariably, when we sliced the meats, we ended up with a few too-thick pieces, which tended to undercook, and some too-thin ones, which got overcooked and chewy. Knowing that we wouldn't be able to apprentice for months with master stir-fry cooks, we came up with a different solution. Just as it's easier to slice a firm cheese than a soft one, we figured, so it must be with meat. So, we chilled the chicken and pork in the freezer for 20 minutes—just long enough to firm it up—making consistent slicing a breeze. —*B.M.*

Reading the Labels

There are hundreds of brands of olive oil on the market, and seemingly just as many classifications, grades, and categories to keep track of on the bottles' labels. Here, a guide to deciphering those labels so that you can find the kind of oil that suits your needs. —*Betsy Andrews*

The *virgin* in the designation **extra-virgin olive oil** refers to the fact that such oils—the kind we recommend for most home-cooking uses—are pressed from fresh olives without the use of chemicals or heat; the word *extra* is meant to denote extra-high quality. Extra-virgin oils must also have very low acidity (0.8 percent oleic acid or less). The terms **cold-pressed** and **first-pressed** are largely superfluous, since virtually all extra-virgin oils come from the first pressing of freshly harvested olives and have not been heat-treated. The terms **stone-pressed** or **stone-ground** do convey a distinction: oils bearing those labels come from olives that have been crushed by heavy stones in old-fashioned mills. Some bottles specify that the oil within is **unfiltered**, meaning that microscopic bits of the fruit, with their flavor-imparting polyphenols, stay in the bottle. Another term frequently seen these days is **estate-bottled**, which means that the olives come from a single property. Perhaps the greatest determinant of an oil's flavor, though, is the type of olives it's made from (see page 64 for descriptions of popular varieties); many bottles specify the types on the label.

Those made from a single kind are often labeled **single varietal**. Finally, there are the lower-quality, non-extra-virgin oils. **Virgin olive oil**, while derived from freshly pressed, untreated olives, is more acidic and less nuanced than extra-virgin oil—and is a fine choice for sautéing and frying. Bottles labeled simply **olive oil** typically contain oil that has been chemically refined and then combined with some extra-virgin or virgin olive oil in order to impart taste and color; such processed oils may also be sold under the label **pure olive oil** or **100 percent pure olive oil**. Virgin or pure olive oils are a low-cost choice for everyday cooking but have little flavor. **Light olive oil** and **mild olive oil** are terms that denote a processed oil that's been blended with only small amounts of virgin or extra-virgin oil to keep pronounced flavors to a minimum (and not, as might be inferred, to reduce caloric content); such oils are designed to appeal to consumers accustomed to neutral-tasting oils. Finally, some restaurants make use of inexpensive oils sold under the name **pomace olive oil** or **olive pomace oil**—oils made from the fruit pulp, or pomace, left over after olives have been crushed for virgin oil.

TODD COLEMAN (2)

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DISCOVER WHERE THEY'VE BEEN...

Our board members travel every inch of the globe to bring you the best in culinary destinations. Here, we highlight some of their most recent trips:

ROBERTO AGOSTINI just returned from Italy with partner Maria, where they took a cooking class on pasta at Hotel Helvetia & Bristol in Florence with Chef Enzo Petté.

BETSY DONLEY just returned from Tiamo Resort on South Andros Island, Bahamas, where, while fly-fishing, she learned how to pick a giant conch out of the ocean, de-shell, and make conch ceviche.

On a recent trip to South Africa, **MAXINE NOHRR** stayed at Singita Boulders Lodge where she had a private wine tasting and discovered a South African treasure—Pinotage, an amazing red wine.

SAMANTHA MCCLURE just returned from a mesmerizing journey to Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar. It was a sensory overload of sights, smells, and tastes. She sampled refreshing wines, tasted exotic fruits in local markets, and learned secrets to the perfect curry.

KATIE MCCORMACK KRINKIE began her adventure in pristine Vancouver, then boarded the *SS Mariner* to cruise through Alaskan waterways, relishing the vast beauty and wildlife while enjoying luxury and indulgences.

ANDREA KINNEY just returned from the Bahamas, where she enjoyed all things conch—conch chowder, conch fritters, conch salad—at their very freshest!

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The Meltdown

THERE ARE A COUPLE OF factors that contribute to the creamy texture of a good macaroni and cheese (see "Elbow Room," page 48). You need a smooth béchamel or egg custard as a base, for one thing, and you need to make sure your cheese melts evenly and becomes one with the sauce and the noodles. Some cheeses are better suited to the task than others. Firm cheeses like cheddar, Comté, fontina, and Gruyère are famously good, uniform melters. In small amounts, hard cheeses like Parmesan and Pecorino Romano work well, too. Mozzarella and goat cheese do not: the former becomes stringy, and the latter will hardly melt at all, ending up instead as sticky clumps. Why? The proteins in those cheeses break down less readily when heated, and so they'll stick together rather than disperse in the sauce. Whichever kinds of cheese you're using, let them come to room temperature before you begin cooking, and grate them as finely as possible; doing so increases the surface area that's exposed to the heat, making for more uniform melting. Also, heat the cheese gently with the sauce; a blast of high heat can cause proteins to break away from the fats, resulting in a grainy texture. —*Victoria Ross*

Fine Frying

Many cooks don't think of olive oil as a good choice for deep-frying, since its smoke point (the temperature at which a fat breaks down, resulting in an acrid smell and taste) tends to be lower than that of other oils. But the fact is, you can get great results deep-frying with olive oil (as demonstrated by the recipe for fried seafood on page 69) if you play by a few rules. First, use a good-quality extra-virgin olive oil; while its smoke point isn't as high as those of some chemically processed olive oils (whose smoke point can be as high as 460 degrees), the flavor it will give the dish is superior. It should also be a filtered oil, as solids in greener oils will burn. And be sure to fry in small batches, since overcrowding the pan can cause the oil's temperature to drop significantly. Attention to such details really pays off: deep-frying with olive oil imparts fruity, peppery flavors and creates an incredibly delicate crust. —*Hunter Lewis*

TODD COLEMAN; ILLUSTRATION: SCOTT MENCHIN

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RECIPES BY CATEGORY

MAIN COURSES

Meat, Poultry, and Fish

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THE PANTRY

A Guide to Resources

In producing the stories for this issue, we discovered ingredients and information too good to keep to ourselves. Please feel free to raid our pantry!

BY BEN MIMS

Fare

Purchase **dolsots** at your local Asian grocery store, or online at Koa Mart ($23.99 for a large bowl; www.koamart.com; look for "stone bowl"). For information on visiting **Lima, Peru**, go to www.peru.info. For more information on Mistura, the International Gastronomy Fair of Lima, go to www.apega.com.pe/quienes_somos_ingles.php. For more information about the **2006 Château de Fieuzal**, visit www.fieuzal.com. Find out about visiting **Tucson** and the stores and restaurants along its 12th Avenue at www.visittucson.org. When visiting Rome, stop by **Pasticceria il Boccione** (via del Portico d'Ottavia 1, Rome; 39/6/687-8637) to try its *pizza ebraica* and other Jewish pastries.

Reporter

To order the varieties of **bananas** featured in our banana glossary, including **red**, **burro**, **baby**, **manzano**, and **plantain** (see page 36), contact Melissa's/World Variety Produce (prices vary by availability; 800/588-0151; www.melissas.com). For more information on Oké and fair-trade bananas, go to www.okeusa.com.

Tools

For more information on **Rich Allen's refrigerator restoring** business, and to see a gallery of his restorations and appliances, go to www.antiquevintageappliances.com.

Olive Oil

You may purchase our favorite olive oils from the following sources: Moulin-Cornille for **Moulin Jean Marie Cornille-Huile D'Olive** ($28 for a 1-liter bottle; 33/490/54-3237; www.moulin-cornille.com), Biolea for **Astrikas Estate-Biolea** ($25 for a 500-milliliter bottle; 30/282/402-3281; www.biolea.gr), DiPalo Selects for **Fontanasalsa** ($30.99 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 877/253-1779; www.dipaloselects.com), Stephen Singer Olio for **Oleificio Chianti Buonaspore** ($28 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 510/666-8481; www.stephensingerolio.com), McEvoy Ranch for **McEvoy Ranch olive oil** ($22 for a 375-milliliter bottle; 866/617-6779; www.mcevoyranch.com), The Olive Press for **arbequina Olive Press** ($26 for a 500-milliliter bottle; 707/939-8900; www.theolivepress.com), Dean & DeLuca for **L'Estornell** ($40 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 316/821-3200; www.deandeluca.com), Zingerman's for **Masia El Altet** ($39 for a 500-milliliter bottle; 734/663-3354; www.zingermans.com), Dean & DeLuca for **Les Terroirs De Marrakech Ancienne Oliveraie** ($26 for a 500-milliliter bottle; see above), Zingerman's for **Moutere Grove** ($35 for a 500-milliliter bottle; see above), and Giangrandi Gourmet for **Giangrandi Intense Blend** ($17 for a 500-milliliter bottle; 305/940-7978; www.giangrandigourmet.com). To make the fried squid, fish, and shrimp recipe (see page 69), use **Wondra flour** (pictured below left), available from ShopFoodEx.com ($3.29 for a 13.5-ounce canister; 800/990-6398; www.shopfoodex.com).

Mombasa

Our favorite brands of **canned coconut milk**, Chaokoh ($1.90 for a 13.5-ounce can) and Mae Ploy ($2.40 for a 19-ounce can), are available online from Grocery Thai (818/469-9407; www.grocerythai.com), but also check your local Asian or ethnic grocery stores for other brands and availability. To make the ginger crab recipe (see page 84), use fresh **Kaffir limes** ($17.65 for 8 limes) and **Kaffir lime leaves** ($14.95 for a 1.5-ounce bag), available from ImportFood.com (888/618-8424; www.importfood.com). To make the grilled whole fish with tamarind recipe (see page 84), buy a nonstick **grilling basket**, available from your local hardware store or at the Home Depot's online store ($9.78; www.homedepot.com), and **tamarind paste** (pictured at left), available from We R Gourmet Foods (3.95 for a 16-ounce package; 888/366-3430; www.wergourmetfoods.com) or **tamarind concentrate**, available from Grocery Thai ($3.25 for a 14-ounce jar; see above). You can purchase **grated coconut** from Phil Am Food ($1.49 for a 1-pound bag, frozen; 201/963-0455; www.philamfood.com) and **fresh tamarind** from Cuban Food Market ($5.49 for a 1-pound box; 877/999-9945; www.cubanfoodmarket.com). Buy **lime pickles**, available from iShopIndian.com ($3.69 for a 10-ounce bottle; 877/786-8876; www.ishopindian.com), to serve with the piri-piri prawns (see page 86). To make the spiced beef flatbreads recipe (see page 86), use **ghee**, available from Kalustyan's ($13.99 for a 16-ounce jar; 800/352-3451; www.kalustyans.com).

Stir-Frying

To buy **woks** and some of the other **stir-frying equipment** needed to prepare our stir-frying recipes (see pages 92–99), visit the Wok Shop (718 Grant Avenue, San Francisco; 415/989-3797) or check out its online store at www.wokshop.com. To make the stir-fried mushrooms and bok choy recipe (see page 92), purchase **dried shiitake mushrooms**, available from My Spicer ($6.02 for a 4-ounce bag; 877/707-4372; www.myspicer.com) and **Shanghai baby bok choy**, available from Melissa's/World Variety Produce (prices vary by availability; see above). To prepare the red-cooked pork belly recipe (see page 93), use **fermented red tofu**, available at Asian markets and at My Ethnic World ($3.49 for an 11-ounce jar, www.myethnicworld.com), and **dark soy sauce**, available from Kalustyan's ($8.99 for a 500-milliliter bottle; see above), where you will also find **toasted Asian sesame oil** ($8.99 for a 6.2-ounce bottle) to make the stir-fried pork with leeks recipe (see page 95). To prepare the stir-fried chicken with celery recipe (see page 98), use **light soy sauce**, available from Import Food ($4.29 for a 10-ounce bottle; see above). To make the everyday fried noodles (see page 99), buy **Chinese wide lo mein noodles**, available from Kalustyan's ($6.99 for an 8-ounce pack; see above) and **rice cooking wine**, available from eFood Depot ($2.70 for a 25.4-ounce bottle; look for "shaoxing" cooking wine; 888/583-3768; www.efooddepot.com).

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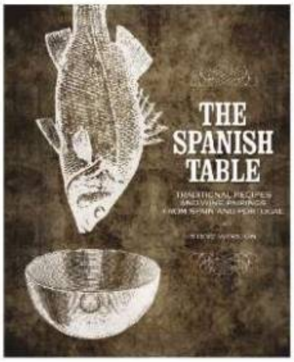

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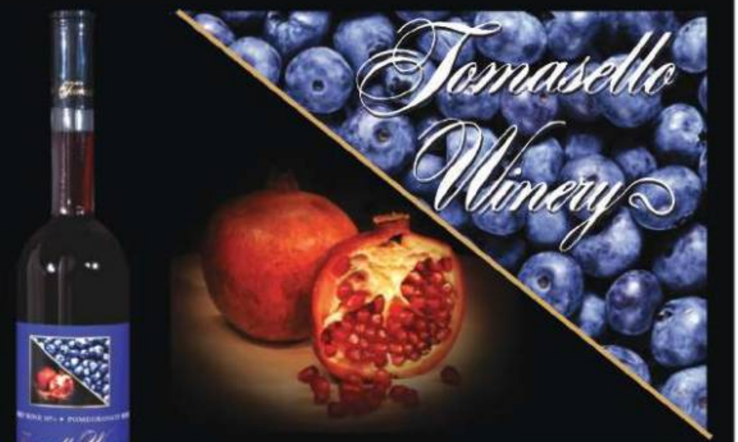

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MOMENT

TIME 6:30 A.M., April 30, 2005

PLACE Santa Fe, New Mexico

Fridgehenge, an installation by Santa Fe artist Adam Horowitz, erected in 2004 on a closed city dump (and dismantled three years later).

PHOTOGRAPH BY BARRY LEWIS/CORBIS

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